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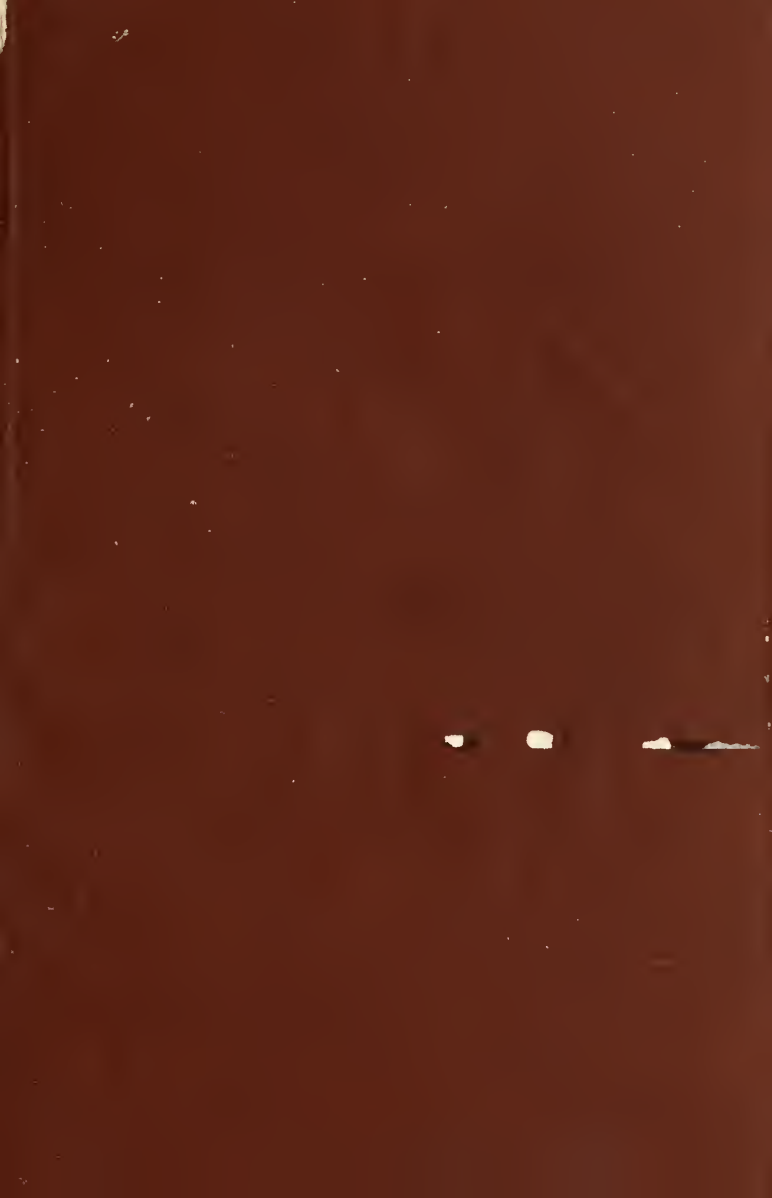
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SAILING

On The NILE



Goldwin Smith.









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SAILING ON THE NILE.

BY

LAURENT LAPORTE.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY VIRGINIA VAUGHAN.

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SAILING ON THE NILE.

I.

CAIRO.

DO you remember, my dear Etienne, having seen the dahabieh of the viceroy of Egypt moored at the quay of the Universal Exhibition? Well, we have just hired a craft exactly like it; in size, shape, and equipment, there is nothing to choose between them; and the crews, too, are alike in their features and color. A little more, and we should be tempted to consider ourselves veritable pachas, to say the least of it, if not the viceroy in person; and, to show how in earnest we are in playing our new parts, we have adopted the turban and the fez, we lounge about all day long and smoke like Turks.

May the winds prove propitious! We commit ourselves to their inconstant breath, like those

migratory birds who, at the approach of winter, fly away to countries nearer the sun.

For, if you wish to know what has brought me to this country, I shall answer you as Ulysses replied to the swineherd Eumeus: "To Egypt my heart impelled me to sail!" Homesick in the cold north, a harmless desire seized me to follow the flight of the swallows; and so hither I came, for no other purpose than to see, as well as others, the sun, the crocodiles, and the palm-trees. I was really tired of hearing so much said about the Arab and his courser, and one fine day allowed myself to be beguiled by that little madcap, the imagination, who can take the longest voyages free of expense, and who ended, as the result of all her fine dreams, by drawing me into this magical Orient.

Now let me acknowledge that I am enchanted with it. The little madcap did not deceive me. Her promises are more than fulfilled: her most beautiful dreams are far transcended by the reality.

How shall I describe our amazement on reaching this venerable land of the Pharaohs? We had just left France plunged in all the sadness of the season of frost. Winter, his forehead crowned

with fogs, had descended from the summit of the Alps : he had stretched his white mantle of snow over the fields, and was stalking abroad, accompanied everywhere by his gloomy train,—icy winds, bare trees, rattling branches, black clouds sweeping over a gray sky, a pallid sun emitting feeble, ineffectual rays. Nothing was wanting to complete the horror of the picture.

And all of a sudden, without any gradation, by one of those abrupt changes of scenery such as one sees upon the stage in spectacular pieces, we find ourselves transported to a land where the sky is pure and limpid, the warm sun is shining, the trees are clad with foliage, the gardens are in full bloom, the flowers are laughing, and the days have grown long as if by enchantment.

The contrast was all the more striking because during our six days' voyage we were constantly enveloped in a thick fog, which pursued us obstinately from Lyons. The treacherous Mediterranean, whose praises you are always sounding, treated us like a very step-mother : we had a short passage, it is true, but were far too rudely rocked by a strong north-west wind, which the sailors called a fine breeze, while we took some pride in denominating it an actual tempest. In

a word, we were six days at sea, without beholding either the sky or water, and then one beautiful morning waked up in the port of Alexandria.

Passing thus suddenly from winter to summer, from the month of January to that of June, may seem, perhaps, a commonplace sort of contrast at the theatre; but in real life it produces a most singular impression. It is all in vain that you have been preparing yourself: you are amazed, and, as it were, stupefied.

But this was nothing to our amazement on venturing into that modern labyrinth, the streets of Alexandria and Cairo. Here every thing looks strange and unwonted, — the men, women, children, camels, donkeys, dogs, pipes, chaplets, turbans: in every thing you see there is something to marvel at and admire. The scene is indescribable. Imagine, if you can, a motley crowd, a glittering whirlpool, a pell-mell of costumes, colors, types, barbarous languages, hostile religions, inimical races; an incredible variety of faces, showing the inexhaustible resources of human ugliness; a deafening hubbub, a fantastic panorama; corpulent Turks wrapped in the scarlet fez, Copts severe with their black turban, dervishes in the pointed felt hat, ragged Arabs, beggars, blind people,

officers all bedizened with gold; figures completely veiled,—inexplicable, phantom-like individuals; caricatures dressed in all the colors of the rainbow;—one and all galloping swiftly to and fro upon a swarm of donkeys, jostling against each other, meeting, passing, getting entangled and disentangled, in the midst of the strangest, most uncouth cries, and the most picturesque confusion. The East is still the land of the “Arabian Nights.”

Add to all this the delight of beholding a perfectly cloudless sky over your heads: to this splendor of nature dazzling the eye, add the glorious recollections dazzling the mind, the emotions you cannot fail to feel in treading this ancient soil, echoing with all the greatest names of history,—Moses, Joseph, Pharaoh, Alexander. Lastly, remember the pleasure of travelling with at once the most agreeable companions and devoted friends, and you will not blame perhaps my too ready outbursts of enthusiasm.

Thus, then, I shall embark for Upper Egypt with an abundance of illusions. In my turn, I shall see Elephantine, now no longer a kingdom; I shall visit the ancient ruins of Thebes, ruins even when they were visited by Germanicus;

and, since you desire it, I will tear out some of the pages of my journal every now and then, and send them to you in token of our fraternal friendship.

How long will my voyage last? I do not know. But do not be disquieted, though I am sailing through the land where the lotus grows. Though a fruit may exist sweet enough to make one forget his country, there is none, I know, that can so blot into oblivion friendship.

II.

DONKEYS AND THE PYRAMIDS.

I WAS very wrong, my dear friend, to remind you of the craft of the viceroy: I quite forgot that the foolish vanity of the proprietor would inevitably lead me to give you a minute description of our own bark; that, whether you wished it or not, you would be obliged to inspect all its recesses. True it is like the one you have already seen; but, since it belongs to us, we cannot let you off from paying it a visit.

Our dahabieh, then, is painted of a bright green, and is about sixty yards long. The after-part is covered by a wooden house, with eleven windows on each side, and one story high above deck. This is our dwelling. We each of us have a bedroom, a bathing-room, and dressing-room; and we share in common a large square saloon, lighted by eight windows and a small glass eupola. This saloon, which we use also as a dining-room, is furnished with a table, mirrors, book-eases, eur-

tains, and hooks for guns. The wainscots are painted white with red borders, and sofas are ranged along the walls. Every thing is small, but neat, convenient, and even elegant.

The roof of the house, to which you ascend by a small outside staircase, is flat, and forms our terrace. It is furnished with chairs and tables, is surrounded by a balustrade, and protected from the sun by a tent. In the forward part of the vessel is the cooking stove, and the main-mast, which carries an immense lateen sail. Another small triangular sail hoists aft near the helm.

Now you know where we live. We selected this dahabieh from among many others at the port of Boulof at Cairo, negotiating with a dragoman, who, for a stipulated sum, is bound by contract to run all the risks of the voyage.

It was on Sunday, February 12th, in the evening, that we took possession officially. This evening we dined on board for the first time, and passed an excellent night in our new rooms, while waiting the dawn of the day which was to conduct us to the Pyramids.

As early as four o'clock in the morning our little donkeys were waiting for us on the wharf, and we galloped swiftly through the streets of

slumbering Boulof. Soon to sink beneath the broad desert horizon, the moon, like an expiring night-lamp, poured forth mighty beams of light, vague, tremulous, uncertain. Some Arab beggars, lying in the dusty road, or leaning against mile-stones, turned their heads lazily to see our little caravan pass by. Nor can I deny that we were a grotesque-looking party. Can you see us, in your mind's eye, muffled up in our dark cloaks, with our military boots, our guns slung over our shoulders, our revolvers in our belts, and our heads shadowed by broad-brimmed felt hats covered with real Mameluke turbans? Can you imagine us — the best of all — perched, in all this terrific and warlike array, upon our peaceful little donkeys trotting quietly along in the dust?

While thus actually mounted and trying, as well as I can, to keep my balance upon a most fantastical saddle, girthed with a piece of old rope, let me tell you something about these delightful long-eared animals. You have heard the saying that the street is the place to look for wit? In Paris the street boys monopolize it, in Egypt the donkeys. You cannot imagine indeed the ardor — I was going to say, verve — of these pretty beasts, so spirited, alert, and gay. With their wide-awake,

animated expression, they win all hearts from the very first. A shrewd, sagacious physiognomy; eyes tender, although keen, set in the sides of the head; well-shaped, clean-cut hind-quarters; and, above all, the most coquettish ears in the world, — these attractions soon complete the conquest of the stranger. Never having seen such enticing donkeys, he does not hesitate to commit himself to their tender mercies, though the saddles are beyond comparison rough and uncomfortable, so that it is a great annoyance to ride upon them. Their gait is either a quick short trot or a fast canter, and this they keep up for hours, and even for whole days; for there is no other creature so indefatigable and fabulously abstemious.

Oh, these adorable little donkeys, worthy descendants of the ass of Baalam! Although skittish, touchy, and intelligent, they still retain, in a measure, that look of philosophical resignation that so delighted Toppfer. Then, too, they have a keen sense of honor, and are always eager to be at the head of the file. I ought to allow, however, lest I be accused of flattery, that fear of the driver's stick may have something to do with this latter trait.

In short, there is no end to the donkey's good

qualities. Henri declares that they are the best portion of the Egyptian population. I remember that in Alexandria our little donkeys carried us of their own accord to visit all the curiosities of the place. I will add that these amiable quadrupeds play a very important part in the picturesque carnival that is perpetually defiling through the streets of Cairo.

On our way, we crossed the fine plantations of Ibrahim-Pacha, and, trotting along through lanes and by-ways, at last reached old Cairo. A boatman carried us across the river, near the island of Rhoda, and landed us at Gizeh, not far from that famous battle-field, where our army routed so effectively the brilliant Mameluke cavalry.

Day now was beginning to dawn : its brightening radiance gradually replaced the moonlight. At this hour the light is vague, the darkness transparent. Our donkeys chose their own way over fields intersected with canals, over verdant meadows bespangled with a slight dew. Rosy turtle doves, snipes, and clouds of pigeons, startled by our approach, were constantly soaring into the air. Some white ibises were walking solemnly among the young shoots of a grove of

cotton plants, from whose half-open pods flew flakes of snow. Suddenly we all cried out with one voice, "The Pyramids!"

The first ray of the rising sun had just struck their summits, and in the midst of the misty aureole of the morning they arose before us white and shadowy as a vision.

I have been promising myself, my dear friend, not to trouble you with any talk about the Pyramids. I have said to myself that the world was full of descriptions already, supplied by a host of travellers of the present day and of the past; and, since the Pyramids have been a theme of discussion for more than forty centuries, that the subject ought really to be worn out.

Above all, I am in great fear of falling into commonplace; of being the mouth-piece of those well-known, formidable sayings, those great truths, — the nothingness of man, the shortness of life, the equality of all before death, &c., — which seem to keep watch about the Pyramids, and pour down their inspiration in mighty waves upon the head of every one who comes into the neighborhood. The fact is that greatness, sublimity in external objects, arouses great thoughts, which, in their turn, require to be expressed in a grand style.

And now, having called these fine sayings formidable, it is only right that I should explain clearly what I mean. As a usual thing, you will be quite safe in denouncing commonplace: nothing in the world is so much detested, and those especially who deal in the article (that style of it which stands for dulness) are none of them so insignificant that they will not exclaim with horror at the very word. But this, it seems to me, is doing injustice to what is really excellent and deserving admiration. For it will not do to confound the hackneyed phrases, the empty, sonorous sentences of a bourgeois wisdom, with the really great commonplace to which I have been referring; that is to say, the great ideas, the universal truths, the generous sentiments of humanity. These ideas and sentiments are, on the contrary, the source and inspiration of eloquence, wit, and poetry. Declaimed by the vulgar, we think them bombastic and insipid, no doubt; but wait until they are launched forth by the great poet or the great orator, for then they stir the deepest emotions of the soul.

Accordingly, one thing is to be remarked, that the greatest geniuses, whether orators or poets, have always uttered a vast deal of commonplace,

and indeed have built up their renown upon it ; as, for example, their thoughts about liberty, the shortness of life, &c. Every one is interested in these subjects, they are constantly being talked about ; but genius alone has power to express them worthily, to give the great idea an adequate formula. When this is done, the generous sentiments, the noble thoughts belonging to all mankind, are incarnated, as it were, in a single verse or period, and are henceforth identified with the poet or orator who has thus made them immortal. Speak of liberty, and you see before you Demosthenes attacking Philip ; the name of Fénelon suggests love, — love alike to God and man ; nor can you remember the shortness of life, the inevitability of death, without recalling at the same time Massillon and Bossuet.

If I am afraid of these great sayings therefore, it is not from a feeling of contempt, but quite the reverse. I am too conscious of my own weakness to forget our good La Fontaine's excellent precept : "We must not force our talent." I shall endeavor to avoid them, for the same reason that I should avoid choosing subjects that Raphael has treated if I were a painter, from writing another *Athalie* if I were a poet, or from imitating the ox if I were a frog.

It will not do, however, completely to ignore the Pyramids under the pretext that the subject is rather old. That would be a poor reason ; for all things are both old and new. Whatever we may say or write to the contrary, no subjects are really worn out. Material objects appear in new relations, as man changes with the lapse of time : even the Pyramids are a novelty to one who has never seen them. Infinitely various are the manifestations of human intelligence ; and, being essentially imperfect, one may say that all that we do has constantly to be done over again. Originality is an intermittent, but an inexhaustible fountain : even in subjects apparently the oldest, those that have been the most often treated, talked about to all eternity, there is always some new point of view to be considered, some new form to be observed, some new aspect to be described. The human mind is constantly renewing itself like Nature. The forest trees will put forth leaves, the flowers will bloom to welcome the coming spring. There is nothing older than the spring, the green fields, and the flowers ; but neither is there any thing younger. And there will always be birds and poets to sing about them ; for Nature is no less inexhaustible than the mind

of man. The forms, the aspects, she presents, are constantly varying : the sensations, the impressions, the sentiments, to which she gives birth, are as diverse and limitless as the infinite power of the Creator. Good heavens ! it is the same with all things ! What subject will be consigned to oblivion two thousand years hence, if the race lives so long ?

But let us return now to the Pyramids. What shall I tell you about them ? Any sort of description would seem to be superfluous ; for their magnitude is really the only remarkable feature about these enormous curiosities. But no one can deny that this mere vastness produces a sublime impression. These long, straight, rigid, unbroken lines ; these large surfaces, smooth, unadorned, lighted by a single sweep of sunshine, taken in by the eye at a single glance, — what could be more effective ? How wonderfully those old Egyptians understood the human heart ! With no idea to embody but this cold geometrical form, they succeeded in producing a monument of the sublimest description, which even now wrests from our weakness a cry of admiration.

And herein, perhaps, lies the secret of the feeling it arouses ; for human weakness always ad-

mires grandeur, force, just as ignorance is awed by what it does not comprehend. To the aristocrat there is a strange sort of fascination in the vulgar herd ; while tyrants and despots, provided that they show some little originality, exert a similar dominion over the populace. There is something flattering to our self-love in the very superiority that crushes us : the lowest of the race says to himself with a certain pride, “ That was done by a man like myself.” Are you ambitious of glory ? Would you hear the trumpets of fame proclaiming your greatness ? — Win battles, and build pyramids ! What does it matter though millions of human lives are sacrificed, though treasures are accumulated and squandered, to gratify the vainest of vanities ? Prove that you are a giant a hundred cubits high, and the people will forgive you for any thing ; for they respect the most what costs them the most, and do not comprehend even glory unless it has an iron arm and a bloody hand. What does history teach ? Posterity forgets and despises the peaceful, genial virtues : it reserves all its crowns, all its applause, for pride and egotism, when displayed on a gigantic scale. The people soon grow weary of hearing about the justice of Aristides : they will

never cease erecting statues to Cæsar. The name of Alexander is engraven upon their memory: that of Marcus Aurelius they have yet to learn.

Thus, then, we admire the tomb of Cheops as we do the exploits of a great conqueror, because they seem to exceed the limits of what can be accomplished by human strength. Moreover, its antiquity gives it prestige, and enhances the effect that it produces. Who could fail to admire the oldest monument of the past and the most durable of the future? And yet the feeling with which it inspires us is a very complex one, consisting not only of admiration, but also of amazement, — an amazement merging into horror and disapprobation.

Gazing at these compact, ponderous masses, these huge rocky piles, I thought suddenly of those marvellous aerial cathedrals, Notre Dame of Paris, and of Strasbourg and Amiens, which we have so often admired together. What contrast could be more striking than that between our cathedrals built voluntarily by a Christian people, and these tombs erected by troops of slaves trembling under the rod of the oppressor! — our churches, symbols of the faith and love of a whole nation; these tombs, monuments of the

barbarity, the cruelty, and monstrous pride of a single man. The Christian Church is typical of the soul's flight to heaven: the Egyptian monuments declare merely the stability of matter, the immutability of the mummy, the immortality of death.

"There is a tomb in the cemetery of Nuremberg," writes Paul de Saint Victor, "which seems greater to my mind than all the hypogeums of Egypt with the colossi that guard them, and the panyrics in letters ten cubits high engraved upon their walls. It is a simple flag-stone inscribed with this one word: '*Resurgam*,' — 'I shall rise again.' Sublime cry uttered by a bare stone, by a broken tomb, by bones crumbling into dust! This one word is a stronger affirmation of immortality than can be furnished by all the pyramids, the sarcophagi, and the indestructible mummies of ancient Egypt taken together."

These thoughts occurred to me while I was donkeying around the great pyramid. It is quite a long ride, — almost half a mile: so that, if I have been tedious, you must blame the size of the old Egyptian monument. This duty performed, we engaged a party of Bedouins, — those Arabs of the desert equally well known as guides and

brigands, — and began the ascent forthwith. Heavens ! what strides ! This is an ascent with the vengeance, — a desperate assault : it is like storming a breach. Every step of the gigantic staircase is at least three feet high, and you clamber up as you can, clutching, clinging with feet, hands, and knees : the Arabs, meanwhile, push you, drag you, harry you, and will not let you stop a second even to breathe. Their only anxiety is to reach the top and receive their pay. “ *Allah ! Allah ! Bucksheesh ! Bucksheesh !* ” is their constant cry. After a quarter of an hour’s dislocations, I sank exhausted upon the platform at the top, and, while the Arabs threw themselves at my feet, demanding their “ *Bucksheesh*,” wrapped myself in my cloak and gazed around me.

The Libyan desert, worthy field of death of these tombs, lies outstretched before you in the west. Far as the eye can reach, you see nothing but a sandy plain, a bare sweep of desolation, an empty void of space, — that strange feature of natural scenery, in a word, which we call Sahara. The desert is always being compared with the ocean, and not without reason. With its grand, heavy, level horizon lines, it impresses and in-

deed overawes the mind as the ocean does: it rises into hillocks rounded and movable like waves; it closes quickly over the track of travellers; and, like the ocean, it devours corpses. When in repose, it is covered with small, regular ripples; but tempests are hidden in its bosom, and its red waves beat incessantly against the base of the Pyramids, corroding them and strewing them with a foam of ashes.

Towards the east, this barren desert meets abruptly, and, as it were, comes into conflict with, a green and smiling valley. They divide the country between them, the line of separation being as sharply defined as if cut with the edge of a sword. The valley is protected from the encroachments of its terrible neighbor, by the Nile: it is the eternal struggle between Osiris and Typhon. Meanwhile, like a god, the "river of beautiful waves" flows majestically through his verdant kingdom, whose boundaries he himself traces anew every year. Egypt is a gift of the Nile: it is the Nile himself,—*Egyptos*, as the ancients called it; for, should the river ever chance to forsake his bed, the fertile valley would be transformed into a desert.

The top of the Pyramids is the place to appre-

ciate the author of "Orientales." With him you exclaim, —

"Resplendent Egypt! See how she displays
Her gorgeous plains, her fields of sunny maize."

Scattered here and there on the plain below, lofty palms, lifting their crowned heads over fellah villages, wave joyously on the wind. Cairo is visible in the distance, its clusters of minarets glittering in the sunshine between the dark groves of Choobra and the necropolis of the Caliphs; while its white citadel, gleaming on the edge of the horizon, intersects the golden background of the Mokattam Hills.

The pyramid of Cephren, whose top is still covered with its granite casing, looms up against the southern sky; and that also of Mycérinus, built, it is said, by the courtesan Rhodope. Still farther off the monuments of Sakarra mark the former site of Memphis. Strange and melancholy spectacle! Whither have vanished the temples, the monuments, the powerful dynasties, the kings, the gods, who once filled this desert with life? What have we inherited of all the splendor and glory of the past? A name that floats in vague uncertainty over the desert.

Of far less interest is the visit to the interior of

the Pyramids, at least to the mere tourist. You are conducted by torch-light through narrow passages, rising and dipping alternately at a very sharp angle ; and so obstructed with rubbish that it is hard work to get along. The walls are of smooth granite, and they lead to the chambers of the king and queen, situated one directly over the other. There is absolutely nothing to be seen in either of these rooms, except the four walls, which are of beautifully polished red granite.

It would be ungrateful in me to forget our breakfast, partaken of so merrily in the shadow of forty centuries, — a necessary preparation for paying our visit to the Sphinx. This mysterious colossus, looking towards Egypt, and with its body almost completely buried in the sand, still proudly uprears its grand, apathetic countenance. In spite of all mutilations, it retains the solemn aspect of the days when it uttered oracles. “ Its enormous ear,” says M. Ampère, “ seems hearkening to the murmurs of the past ; while its eyes, turned towards the east, are spying out the dawn of the future. It really seems the terrible god of destiny, of fatality. Awful and imposing image, in thy enigmatical countenance we read the secret of the religious faith of the old Egyptian priests ! ”

Towards evening we returned to our craft, which awaited us at the anchorage of Gizeh. The swollen, three-cornered sails were hoisted to the wind ; the tri-colored flag fluttered about with French vivacity ; the domes and minarets of Cairo faded away in the distance ; the island of Rhoda, with its Nilometer and its flowering gardens, gradually sank into the Nile ; and our dahabieh floated joyously towards Upper Egypt.

III.

THE CREW.

NOW that I have given you a description of our craft, my dear Etienne, you must let me introduce you to the crew: our dragoman; our reis, or the captain; the mate and pilot, who are one and the same person; and our eight Nubian sailors. With our servant Nicolo and the cook, there are altogether seventeen of us on board.

Honor to whom honor is due. Our dragoman must receive my first consideration. Imagine a very small man, thin and wiry beyond description; and with long, lank, loose-looking arms, that seem as if they must be fastened to his shoulders by hinges; his head is like that of a mummy, he wears a black wig, and moves with the suppleness of a machine and the grace of an automaton. With such a *tout ensemble*, acknowledge that he would be a prize for an antiquarian.

As for his character, a single incident will give

you an idea of that. On the evening of our departure we naturally made inquiries about his preparations, — whether he was ready to start, whether the wind was in the right quarter, the sailors on hand, &c.; but all that we could get out of him was that he had taken great pains to have at least three kinds of preserves among his stores of provisions, and that we would find them excellent. He is always in a flurry about nothing, occupies himself with petty details, and completely loses his wits over a box of sugar-plums. Although an Egyptian by birth, he professes, I believe, to be a Christian, — at least he is always boasting that he belongs to our church: whether he knows or cares what that is I do not know. At Cairo he wore the European dress, and we called him Michel; since then he has resumed his loose trowsers, striped belt, and turban, and we find it more in keeping to call him Micaeli. To sum up, he is really an excellent man, thoroughly honest and amiable, and gives us the best of preserves.

Abouset, our reis, is a colossal Nubian, black as the ace of spades; the laziest, most imperturbable mortal that I ever encountered. Dull and heavy as a gorged serpent, he spends the

principal part of his time squatting cross-legged in a corner. Rousing him out of his stupor is one of the labors of Hercules, and it is only on great occasions that he will condescend to do any thing; but when he does lay hold I must acknowledge that it is something worth while: with a single motion he shakes the whole craft.

The pilot, Mustapha, is, beyond a doubt, the most accomplished member of the crew. He knows enough French to say *oui* and *non* and *bon soir*, *Messieurs*,—is a devout Mussulman, and keeps the ramadam strictly. Now, during the fast, the poor fellow is not allowed to taste food or water from sunrise to sunset. About five he loses patience, and turning to us in sheer desperation inquires by signs whether the time of his release has not come. We look at our watches, and nod. Instantly he seizes a glass of water, swallows it slowly and ecstasically; and then, before eating a morsel, which you would suppose would be his next step, indulges in the luxury of smoking his pipe,—for while the cruel ramadam lasts the Turk is even forbidden the use of tobacco, probably the greatest of his privations. For several days Mustapha has contented himself with consulting the sun when he wants to

know the hour, so that I am afraid he has remarked that our watches are not to be depended upon.

Our eight sailors are young Nubians, black as the latest invented writing-ink, but both intelligent and agreeable. I shall have occasion to speak of them again from time to time.

And now would you like to know something of our life on board? Perhaps you imagine that time hangs heavy on our hands, that we find the days long and monotonous; but this is a great mistake. When the wind is fair, the dahabieh spreads her great three-cornered sails and skims swiftly on her way. The crew, meanwhile, assemble on deck, and, passing around the circle a nargile of hashish, which is very intoxicating, amuse themselves by singing their plaintive, monotonous choruses. Indeed, whether at work or play, whether the wind is fair or adverse, these men are always singing. You can depend upon it that something is wrong as soon as you do not hear their voices: a quarrel or disturbance of some kind is brewing. They are great fighters, and sometimes have such desperate battles that it becomes necessary for the reis to interfere: he separates the combatants, and beats them

furiously over their heads with his stick. In Egypt this is the infallible remedy, and always restores peace.

Think of it! What a degraded state this poor country is in! The stick is the great power, and plays as important a part in the government of the State as in that of the bark: it may be called, without metaphor, the prime minister of Egypt. This is the only sceptre which his highness the Khédive seems ambitious to wield. Indeed, it would be quite in accordance with facts to divide the whole population into two classes, the beaten and the beaters; and for my part it seems to me that the beaters are the most to be pitied of the two, that they are the most injured morally by this unnatural state of things. When it is necessary for the magistrates and officers of the country to travel, they take with them an enormous supply of cudgels; and heaven knows they are kept in constant use. For the smallest offence, getting in the way of some insignificant officer donkeying by, or any thing else that may chanee, the unlucky fellah is soundly flogged. Bending his back, he submits to the operation, and trots off quite contented, rubbing his shoulders. Poor people, they are indeed to be pitied! How many

centuries will be required to elevate them out of this slavish servility, to which they have been reduced by a government founded upon brute violence!

The craft glides swiftly through the water, followed by a long track of foam. Seated upon our terrace, puffing away at our long chibouks and enveloped in clouds of smoke, we pass hours and whole days in gazing at the scenery, yet know no weariness.

Woods of palms rise on either shore of the Nile, waving gracefully over a multitude of little mud-built hovels scattered in all directions under their shade. Fine plantations of corn, dhourra, tobacco, and cotton, are separated by stately groves of syeamore-trees, bananas, and tamarisks.

We can see the men working in the fields; the poorer class of laborers being principally engaged in driving the ploughs, which are drawn by yokes of camels.

And now, with their blue robes falling from the shoulders, a party of fellahines came thronging down to the river to fill their large urns of graceful, antique form. They wade into the water half way up to the knee, and when they have filled

their jugs assist each other in replacing them upon their heads. Some of them carry their children upon their shoulders, while little naked urchins are always playing about them in the sand.

A little farther off, a party of grave Mussulmen are devoutly performing their ablutions. Laying their cloaks upon the shore, and turning towards Mecca, they go through the successive prostrations and genuflections that constitute their peculiar form of worship.

Long processions of camels file slowly into sight, nodding their heads with a look of majestic stupidity, as they follow the winding shore of the Nile; the men of the party donkey on in advance, lolling lazily almost on the very tails of the strong little creatures that carry them; the women follow on foot, with heavy burdens on their heads.

Sometimes immense herds of buffaloes rush down to the river, and plunging in are lost to sight. There they remain during the hottest hours of the day, completely hidden in the water, and only thrusting out their shining snouts, from time to time, to breathe.

The air is full of the warbling of birds. Innu-

merable pewits, white chevaliers, and violet siksaks are hopping about upon the sandy shore ; while overhead great triangular flocks of wild ducks flock the eternally cloudless sky.

Running parallel with the river, and constituting the natural boundaries of Egypt, which is nothing but one long valley, are the Arabian and Libyan mountains,—both chains rocky and barren. The valley, meanwhile, has this remarkable feature, that it is slightly convex in section with the channel of the Nile running along the line of highest elevation. Most valleys are formed like a trough, with the river that waters them at the lowest point. In Egypt it is just the contrary ; and the Nile consequently has only slightly to overflow its banks, in order to inundate the whole country.

The flanks of the mountains are peopled with the populations of the past : hollowed out in the rocks are innumerable and spacious halls, corridors, chambers, tombs, their walls covered with hieroglyphics and paintings in an astonishing state of preservation. Wells of immense depth and great pits are also found, containing prodigious quantities of mummies, not only of men, but of wolves, oxen, crocodiles, serpents, ibises, and

other animals which composed the Pantheon of the ancient Egyptians.

Beyond the mountains lies the desert, sterile, fiery. What is Egypt but a great oasis in the midst of an immense desert? "Sometimes," says Chateaubriand, "there is a stealthy, treacherous movement in the vast plain. It shoots forth long, meandering streaks of sand, like golden serpents, veining the fertile valley with desolation."

As we advance, the capricious Nile winds about in the most astonishing manner. Now narrow, foaming, and of a turbid yellow color, then broad, smooth, and as darkly blue as the sky, it seems by turns a mere stream, a river, and a torrent. Sometimes it looks like an immense lake: its shores seem to meet, and the stranger with his unaccustomed eye seeks in vain for the outlet.

At this season, when the river is low, the numerous sand-banks are quite a feature of the landscape: with their white, glittering, evenly rounded surfaces, they look as if they were warming their backs in the sun. These low islands are a favorite resort with the crocodiles, who like nothing so well as to sleep upon them; while as for ducks and other wading birds, they collect about their edges by thousands.

Boats of all descriptions furrow the river day and night, — fishermen's skiffs, ferry boats, sailing boats, crafts with high sterns, others with showy, ornamented cabins: rafts of *ballasée*,¹ slave-ships, the dahabiehs of travellers, — white, gray, square and pointed sails, — are everywhere chasing, passing, and crossing each other, in every conceivable way. When we meet French travellers, we invariably fire a salute, — six discharges of our revolvers.

Yonder is a great floating mill, built upon two boats fastened together, and nearly driven under water by the weight of the mills. Seated on the top of this floating pyramid, the reis smokes his chibouk, and looks so solemn and antique that we might take him for old king Cheops.

And now suddenly a great steamboat sweeps round the bend of the river. Without so much as a glance at our little craft, it puffs haughtily by. But no matter: the dahabieh is just as proud. Naturally, — as a sailing boat should, — it feels the greatest contempt for these enormous hulks, moved by machinery, — shrieking, whistling, smoking, panting, and always out of breath, making a tremendous uproar, but never meeting with any

¹ A large porous water jar manufactured in Egypt.

agreeable adventures in their travels, and never knowing either repose or enjoyment. For our part, we rail against them, and with very good cause. It is perfectly true that they are a nuisance: they disturb our quiet siestas, they agitate the smooth-flowing waters of the Nile, they puff clouds of smoke between us and the sky; they break the dreamy spell that hovers over the landscape; they frighten the crocodiles, and scare away the Muses.

No one can deny that the sailing boat, slipping so modestly along without the least smoke or noise, is really poetic; while the steamboat, with its shrieking machinery, its speed and comfort, its red painted chimney, and varnished weathercock, is no less prosaic and disagreeable. True it has the advantage of the sailing boat in speed and directness; but, if travelling for pleasure, the craft wafted by the breath of heaven is infinitely to be preferred.

The sailing vessel is the child of antiquity. It plays an important part in the early history of all nations, and is especially at home in this old valley of the Nile,—the primitive cradle of the human race.

The steamboat belongs exclusively in the vortex

of modern times : it represents progress, speculation, haste, confusion.

The old system of navigation, the spirit of the past, — these survive in the sailing vessel : that adventurous, free, hopeful spirit, which never ceases to believe in adventures, to love novelty and trust the future.

Man is the God of the steamboat : it depends upon him for its every movement. The sailing vessel relies upon its good genius, that mysterious and invisible force which comes from on high.

When the wind is adverse, the sailors draw the boat by a rope : this is called tracking, and is very hard work ; but they keep up their courage with their songs and shouts. These delays enable us to ramble on shore and go hunting, — a sport in which we can indulge without being afraid either of gendarmes or rural police. The fellahs, of course, look at us with great curiosity, and seem to feel the deepest respect both for our persons and our guns. When we speak to them, they lay the hand upon mouth, forehead, and heart, — the graceful Arab salutation. Sometimes we try and find out where the best hunting ground is ; and then the variety and impressive-

ness of their gestures, and their eagerness to give us information, are really wonderful. They run after wounded game as promptly as a pointer: look for the poor bird dropped in the field, or dive for it if it has fallen in the river, and only expect a little powder in reward.

During the heat of the day we take refuge in the saloon: this is our time for reading, jotting down notes in our journals, writing letters, and, above all (this I need scarcely mention, as you know my companions), talking, arguing, discussing, — one of our principal occupations.

We were five days in reaching Benisuef, the first city you come to after leaving Cairo. The wind was fair, and we decided not to stop until our return.

IV.

THE FELLAH.

TO-DAY the wind has turned against us ; and, although the crew are tracking vigorously, the dahabieh advances but slowly. We, meanwhile, amuse ourselves wandering about on the shore among the cotton and dhourra plantations, and try our luck aiming at the immense flocks of pigeons whizzing and whirring over our heads,—not a shot that does not bring down some half-dozen of them.

In the villages we create a great commotion. Catching sight of us, the men start up, the women hide their faces in their veils, the dogs bark, and the children scamper away at full speed, shouting, “ Bucksheesh, Howadji.”

Villages I call them, but only because I do not know what other term to employ: it is in fact far too pretentious a word to be used in connection with the forlorn, poverty-stricken groups of hovels in which the fellahs live. Built of Nile mud mixed with straw, not more than from about

five or six feet in breadth to four in height, with no roof except a ragged straw matting, and for the most part quite unfurnished, unless an earthen jug, an empty basket, and an old matting can be entitled furniture,—these huts are among the lowest and poorest of all human habitations.

There is usually a little yard in front of them, into which the door, or rather the hole that takes the place of a door, opens, and which is enclosed by a wall breast-high. Here are kept the sheep, goats, pigs, fowl, and other domestic animals, herded all together, and having moreover free access to the hut. In the one room within, the whole family — father and mother, sons and daughters, little children and venerable old grandparents — spend their time lolling about on a thick mattress of dust. Here they all live, tossing about, grunting, rolling, wallowing, laughing and talking, eating and drinking, and, by the mercy of God, living and growing.

Meanwhile every thing is covered with myriads of flies, innumerable swarms of which go buzzing and whirling about all kinds of filth and refuse heated by a sun fifty or sixty degrees Réaumur. Imagine all this, and you will perhaps be able — except for the odors, to which I will not refer —

to form some idea of the strange domiciles of the modern Egyptians.

Large in stature, and remarkable for his statuesque beauty, the appearance of the fellah is very striking. He has the true oval head peculiar to the Arab type; brilliant eyes, slanting up towards the outer angles; a well-shaped mouth with the lips slightly projecting, and superb teeth; a well-formed aquiline nose, with the nostrils large and open like those of the negro; a small chin and rather thin beard.

His complexion varies with the region of his abode, being darker towards the south. In the Delta he is of a light bronze, and in Upper Egypt quite black.

His cotton shirt is the only garment he indulges in; but, falling in graceful folds about his fine figure, he wears it with no less dignity than if it were a Roman toga. His shaved head is covered either with the turban or the fez.

Degraded by slavery and his constant practice of taking alms, the fellah can scarcely be regarded as a responsible moral being. Indolent and a fatalist, he never works except when forced to do so by absolute necessity. There is but one thing that he cares for, — repose: he has but one occu-

pation, — beggary. Every fellah is a beggar. Bucksheesh is the first word they teach their children. These little savages run about completely naked until the age of puberty; their only ornament a long lock of hair, waving fantastically on the top of their shaved heads. In their early years they are lively and intelligent; but too soon they learn their father's trade, — to submit to blows and solicit alms.

The blue chemise of the fellahines, falling from the shoulders to a little above the ankle and open at the breast, is decidedly picturesque. The veil which they wear is also blue: it is thrown over the head and falls about them in ample folds. Sometimes, when they want to hide their faces, they catch hold of this fluttering blue banner with their teeth, and so partially effect their object. The fellahines are sometimes tattooed upon forehead and chin, and they dye their nails with henna.

In the country you often meet them unveiled. They are generally ugly, and, thanks to their too early marriages and excessive hard work, are almost always faded and even deformed. Still I have sometimes seen a great beauty among them, preserving so astonishingly the Egyptian type,

that you feel as if you were looking at one of the old sculptures of Athos or of Isis awakened to life.

But really to appreciate the grace of the fellahine, you must see her returning from the river with a jug of water upon her head. Her bare arms bent back to hold her burden, her garment draped about her body like a Greek tunic, and falling in numerous folds, straight and elinging, — she walks proudly forward with a slow and measured step. Like that of the master-pieces of antiquity, her expression is grave, serene, and harmonious; and in her grand and simple poses she emulates the basket-bearers of the sacred processions. In the greatest works of art we do not find more dignity and grace than is sometimes displayed by these peasants of the Saïd.

“Here, in this land enslaved, man once was great :
And proves it still ; — his rags he wears with grace,
And from his dark eyes shoots a glance elate.
Majestic in despair, behold his face !

“Regal these tatters are, these woes divine,
Torn into shreds, the gold robe still is gold ;
'Tis still the East, — these ruins, this decline ;
These shivered tombs are marble as of old.”¹

¹ M. Ampère.

Even the villages themselves, so poor that there is nothing in France that can give an idea of them, are completely transformed when seen from a distance, enveloped in the warm, rich atmosphere of Egypt, or illumined by the splendors of the setting sun. The mud hovels grouped under the green aureole of the palm-trees, the outlines of the pigeon-houses looking like the decorations of some opera scene, form a charming spectacle ; while every bend of the river reveals the most exquisite scenery. The light in the east works miracles.

V.

SAKIAS AND SHADOOFS.

A CAPRICIOUS turn of the Nile had swept us away from the Arabian chain, but after passing Samallout we found ourselves once more gliding along under the shadow of its impending cliffs. One of the mountains near Samallout, which plunges steeply down to the edge of the water, and with strange projections seaming its scarred flanks, like immense curiously intertwined arabesques, is called Djebel-el-Tair, — the Mountain of the Bird.

On its summit stands the Coptic schismatic convent of Dier-el-Adra, — the Convent of the Virgin ; not at all a good specimen of Christian architecture, as it consists merely of a collection of small, stone buildings, constructed in the rudest fashion.

As we were passing, we noticed a man standing on a high cliff near the convent, which must have commanded a very extensive view. The

moment he caught sight of us, he sprang from his rocky perch, and running down the rough mountain side at headlong speed joined a brother friar or confederate who was standing on the shore. Jumping into the water, they swam vigorously towards our craft, hailed us on coming within sight of it, and without more ado clambered up on the deck.

Who these unexpected visitors were we could not divine, nor did there seem any way of learning. Certainly we could gain no clew from their dress, since one wore nothing but a tahi (a sort of little white cap), while the costume of the other was even more primitive.

Our dragoman came to our assistance, and informed us that they were beggar friars belonging to the convent, and were in the habit of interrupting their meditations for the purpose of imploring charity of Christian travellers. In confirmation of this report, the good brothers began crossing themselves and intoning their petition, "Buck-sheesh, Christiani." We gave them several piastres; and, overwhelming us with expressions of gratitude, they put the money into their pockets, — I mean into their mouths, — jumped once more into the Nile, and soon regained the shore.

Upon my word the proverb is correct: it is not the dress that makes the monk. This is really a very remarkable convent: it is perhaps the only one in the world which has preserved the primitive costume of the race in all its simplicity.

The wind continuing fair, we flew on with all sails spread, leaving Beni Hassan and its grottoes to be visited on our return.

Soon after this, Antinoë came into sight, plainly visible on the left shore of the river. The temples of this ancient city have recently been converted — a most disgraeful and abominable speculation — into enormous and hideous factories, which for ever dim the splendid Eastern sky with clouds of smoke.

This was the work of the government, that cruel and mercenary government of the pachas, which has no respect either for the liberty or lives of its people, and is equally regardless of the claims of history and science. The pachas are avaricious and greedy in the extreme. They have destroyed the monuments of Antinoë, merely for the sake of extracting the lime of which they were constructed. This all-important speculation has afforded them a sufficient excuse for sending shrieking machines to disturb the religious silence

of ruins, for profaning temples, violating tombs. With their saerilegious eoatings of whitewash, they have effaced a page of history, — *Auri sacra fames.*

The shadoof, that primitive maehine, which we find painted on the walls of the old hypogeums of Beni Hassan, and which is seldom seen in Upper Egypt, is very prevalent in the region about Minyeh.

The sakia and shadoof, as you know of course, my dear Etienne, are the principal instruments of irrigation on the shores of the Nile. Rendering possible a suecession of harvests, whereas the yearly inundation of the river would only ripen a single crop, they are absolutely necessary to the very existence of the inhabitants. The sakia consists of two perpendicular wheels, moved by a horizontal eog, and turning in a pit open to the river. The outer wheel is girdled with a series of earthen jars, which are filled with every revolution it makes: as the jars aseend, the water is emptied into a trough or channel of earth, and flows thence into small canals, with which the fields are intersected. The sakia is worked by a pair of oxen.

The shadoof, whieh is worked by men, consists

simply of leather buckets swung upon a pole, and balanced by some weight, as of a hard clod of earth. The men who work the machine — and very severe and exhausting labor it is — plunge the buckets into the stream with great rapidity: as they are drawn up, the water is emptied into a channel or reservoir prepared to receive it, and, as with the sakia supply, is conducted off and distributed over the country.

While strolling through the verdant fields, or over the parched beach scaling and crackling under my feet, I often pause to watch the unhappy slaves who spend their lives in this exhausting toil. Naked under a burning sun, streaming with water and sweat, and often blind, they bend without an instant's rest over their ungrateful task, and mingle with the grinding of the shadoof a tremulous and monotonous chant.

With this machine, it is calculated that a man, in a single minute, can lift sixty or seventy pints of water nine or ten feet. Where the banks are high, there are usually several ranges of shadoofs, the lower pouring into the reservoirs of the upper: I have counted as many as five. Thus the soil is kept constantly moist without any assistance from the waters of the sky: the Nile does

what the rain cannot do, — it fertilizes the desert.

The river begins to rise at about the summer solstice: it increases in volume for a hundred days, and then again, from October to February, diminishes. It is now therefore at its lowest point, and notwithstanding it is more than half-a-mile wide.

An almost daily adventure with us now is running upon sand-banks. When this occurs, the sails are spread, the crew jump into the water, the captain and mate arm themselves with poles, and all set to work. It is curious to feel the keel slowly uplifted by their laborious efforts; to hear their stifled cries and almost groans, as they put forth all their strength to accomplish their task. When the boat begins to move, they cheer and hurrah lustily, and as it fairly floats off leap merrily over the gunwales.

VI.

DREAMING AMONG THE PALMS.

THE wind contrary. Making the most of our misfortunes, I go on shore, and stroll along with my gun on my shoulder, deeply inhaling the pleasant morning breeze. A large wood of palms stretches along the bank of the river. There is no end, indeed, to these eternal palm-trees; but you never grow tired of them. There is such variety in their grouping, their size, their attitudes, such a charm in their beauty and grace, that their sameness never palls upon you. Everywhere they spread their open parasols, inviting you to come and rest under their green, refreshing shade. These are perhaps the largest and most beautiful trees that I have ever seen. The stalk shoots up slender and vigorous, and flings boldly forth between the blue sky and the earth its green vault, light and trembling with soft undulations.

What a pleasant morning! Every thing is so fresh and calm and verdant. Solemn in his

majestic simplicity, the sun is rising: his brightening rays quiver through the waving foliage, and scatter rosy arabesques over the gnarled trunks of the forest. The air is full of a shrill warbling, and, as myriads of birds, green, blue, and red, sport and flutter under the graceful pointed arches of the intertwisted palms, scintillates with gleaming hues. Mounting guard upon the sandy shore of the river, the siksaks, with their violet cloaks, repeat their sharp, monotonous cry. Soft, tender, rose-hued turtle doves, cooing, calling, seeking each other, flutter amorously to and fro; while rustling their tails, perking up their heads, flaunting about in every sort of way, coquettish young pewits hop familiarly under my very feet. All absorbed with their toilets, they quite forget that they may be in danger.

Wandering among these natural colonnades, I comprehend the fascination of solitude. I am penetrated, subdued, by her seductive charm. Often, when gazing upon extensive views, — the bewildering vastness of the desert, the immensity of the cloudless sky or shoreless ocean, — I have felt my breast dilate, my soul has expanded as if to fill all space.

But in these delicious-green sanctuaries, under

these shady vaults, shut in from the outer world, even from the sky itself, where all is harmony, silence, mystery ; the air heavy with a divine blending of the twittering of birds, hovering odors, sweet, penetrating exhalations, — the soul withdraws into her own kingdom and abandons herself completely to the dominion of the imagination. But not the imagination of the intellect alone, fantastic, capricious, but to that born of feeling, capricious too it may be, but kind and irresistible ; a powerful fairy, who knows neither time nor space nor obstacles, who lives upon memory, regret, hope.

Oh, who has not felt the charm of this good genius ? Who can resist her power, her attractions, when she sheds a light all around us, or transports us into new worlds, purer, more beautiful and brilliant than ours ? when she lifts slightly the veil of misery in which we go enshrouded in this valley of tears, and shows us, in a brief gleam, some little corner of the ideal ? Who can describe the sublime visions, the ravishing delights, the effulgence of those blessed hours ? And is it not she who ennobles our dearest affection, our tenderest recollections ? who speaks to the soul in a mysterious language other than of words and phrases ?

Who has not taken delight in following this vagrant, capricious guide? Vague, subtle, fanciful, uncertain, are the thoughts with which she fills the soul; born without a cause and succeeding each other without sequence. Little by little, we allow ourselves to be swept away by the pleasant, irresistible current. Then she takes possession of our bark, and amuses herself by leading us astray from reverie to reverie, from illusion to illusion; she whispers in our ears names that make us tremble, that thrill and agitate us; we reveal to her our dearest secrets, and with Love himself she enters into a plot to blind our reason. Then the traitress leads us into a forest full of seductive dreams, of unimagined blisses; she shows us the future blooming with flowers, exhaling emanations that intoxicate us with a strange, voluptuous ecstasy.

But ere long the fickle one soars back into the past: deeply moved, she carries us back to the old days fragrant with the blossoms of childhood. She recalls pleasant home scenes, she brings before us the beings whom we cherished the most in that happy time, those for whom we have felt the deepest love, the most bitter regrets that our life has known. We hear their voices,

we listen to their counsel, we feel what their wish would be, we yield to their influence; and in this silent converse, this mysterious communion of souls, we seem to become better,—we feel an inexpressible joy that has power to stanch our tears. Then it is that we regret, that we hope, that we dream, that we love; then it is that we live with those who are ever in our thoughts, though their names do not pass our lips.

The vision vanishes; but the emotions, the dreams, the fleeting throng of idle delusions in which we have indulged, leave lingering behind them a feeling of content, of well-being, which we are able to recall, and can still enjoy many years later. The places, too, where we are surprised by such reveries, make a singularly vivid impression upon the mind. I can still see the trees that cast their shadows over me on that day, the birds that fluttered skimming through the air. Here was a green herb, here a bed of sand, and yonder a bush from which some little copper-colored beetles were crawling. I can still see two little girls who were filling a basket at the foot of a palm-tree. As I approached, they fled terrified, upsetting their booty in their haste, and abandoning it.

Seating myself upon a fallen palm-tree prone

by the water's edge, I awaited the craft which the sailors, oppressed by the burning sun, were dragging along with much difficulty. In front of me a green island gleamed in the encircling arms of the Nile, blue as sapphire. I saw three fellahs crossing one arm of the river to go to the island. They had fastened their shirts over their heads, and were swimming astride a bundle of sugar-cane stalks. The Arabian mountains, with their silvery summits and sandy base, stood out from against the sky.

At night-fall we entered a narrow defile, which pilots and captains regard with just apprehension. Before reaching Mantfalout, the river, confined between a precipitous bank and the encroaching spurs of the Arabian mountains, is full of eddies, and dashes along with fearful speed. Drowsy and indolent as a pacha in his harem seems the Nile when outstretched voluptuously in his winding course, but he is capable of these sudden and terrible outbreaks of fury. Exasperated by obstacles, he roars with rage, his waves rise in insurrection: dashing threats and insults in all directions, the foam leaps forth. White squadrons of billows, driven back and forth, surging furiously over the rocks and sinking back into the hollow channel,

pursuing and crowding each other down, meet and elash with the shock and uproar of contending armies. Thus for ever they storm the impregnable fortresses, shutting them in on both sides.

The wind, engulfed in the narrow valley, takes part in the mighty struggle; beating against the rocks, it increases with its clamorous cries the universal uproar. Now hiding her face and now revealing it, the moon seems to run rapidly athwart the clouds that overshadow the sky. You can see the storm-birds whirling about in her rays, which, when they touch the water, glitter like fiery serpents. The rocky banks, full of black caverns, assume the strangest, the most fantastic aspects. Colossal figures of Typhon you seem to see, threatening you with hideous grimaces; or giants crouching down upon the shore: the motion of the boat and fitful gleaming of the moonlight make them look actually alive and moving.

Careening over, our dahabieh has a hard battle to fight with the impetuous torrent. Scarcely can she force her way through the resisting waves: on her sides they rear themselves up threateningly, and at her stern reunite with a shudder. She is followed by a long wake of foam.

The mast is bent by the energy of the wind.

Standing in the forward part of the boat, the captain thrusts every instant a long pike into the water, and shouts in a hoarse voice to the pilot, who answers him in a similar tone. Two sailors hold the sheet, ready to let it go in case a too violent gust should render it necessary.

Some two hours later the Arabian chain was fading away in the distance. The Nile, freed from obstructions, had grown broad and smooth, and the wind was wafting us swiftly towards Asyoot.

VII.

ASYOOT.

IT seemed as if we should never reach Asyoot ; as if the capricious Nile had resolved to tantalize us with vain hopes and delusions. Every now and then, skimming round a sudden bend of the river, we would catch a delicious glimpse of gleaming minarets set in verdure apparently close at hand, but only to be swept away in the opposite direction, and find ourselves at last baffled by contrary winds and as far as ever from our goal.

At last, however, we really did arrive ; and, bestriding our donkeys, — for Asyoot, formerly Lycopolis, and now the capital of Upper Egypt, lies inland about half a league from the river, — we trotted off gayly to visit it ; our road winding through verdant fields, fragrant with flowers, and shaded with splendid gum-trees, and acacias in full bloom.

Asyoot, with its flat-roofed houses, its many-

domed mosques and many-storied minarets, their slender spires shooting up into the clear blue atmosphere, and gleaming against the pale-hued Libyan mountains, is the most Oriental of Oriental cities. A belt of luxuriant gardens encircle it with a sweep of shade; while the scene is rendered still more picturesque by a beautiful airy bridge, a single ogival arch, paved with large, embossed stones, and spanning the arm of the river, which washes its walls. In all directions wave groves of feathery palms, while in the city is the usual motley collection of temples and mud hovels, bournous, turbans, and rags, solemn camels swinging their stupid heads, and spirited little donkeys; forming altogether one of those classical Eastern views, which surprise us all the more because they are so exactly like the pictures of the East with which we are all familiar, — pictures that are to be seen in any of our galleries.

Crossing the bridge, we entered the steep, narrow, and winding streets. The first building of importance that we came to was the barracks, always the sign of a certain sort of civilization; soon after, the half-open door of a mosque afforded us a sufficient glimpse of a party of devout Mussulmen; and next we passed — but without feeling

the slightest temptation to enter and try their virtue — the most famous baths in Egypt. The satisfaction of being scalded we had already enjoyed in Cairo.

The bazaar, the centre of the life of the town, is the great resort alike of strangers and natives : we stopped for a moment, and purchased some finely earved pipes and other articles of native manufacture. The streets were immensely thronged with strangers ; travellers, merchants, pedlers of all sorts ; countrymen selling vegetables and oranges ; loungers and smokers. Through all this turmoil we made our way, and reached at last a large, pleasant-looking court, surrounded by a Moorish portico supported by wooden columns, and shaded by some fine, darkly foliaged sycamore-trees. The Arabs seated at the entrance started up, and we rode in triumphantly on our brave little donkeys.

The consular agent, who was seated on the gallery, received us with the usual extravagant Oriental courtesy, which we returned in kind, and ordered coffee and chibouks. To him we intrusted our letters for France.

For my own part, I confess that I thought it extremely doubtful whether our poor letters would

ever reach their destination ; but it seems that I did Egypt injustice, since it really has a well-organized postal service. Their system is a primitive one certainly, but your letters are safe enough. A strong, sure-footed man (the regular old-fashioned courier) sets out from the farthest limits of Nubia, and runs as rapidly as he can for several leagues, ringing his bell, and followed by the good wishes of all he meets : he does not relax his speed until he is relieved of his burden by a second courier, whom he meets at an appointed village. Thus they advance from station to station until connection is established with Cairo. The service is not regular, but it does really exist ; not indeed for the benefit of the public, which is a word without meaning in this region, but for that of the government. You see, my dear friend, that civilization proceeds slowly on these beautiful shores of the Nile. Egypt can boast of her steamboats, her swift horses, and fleet-footed dromedaries ; but the life of a man is considered of less value than that of beasts.

As soon as we had done justice to our coffee and chibouks, we paid our respects to the consul, who bade us farewell in poetic style, laying his

hand upon his heart and lips ; and, bestriding our donkeys with all due gravity, rode back to the craft ; but not without glancing regretfully at the massive tombs of the ancient necropolis, resting dark and shadowy against the mountains, now all glowing with sunset hues.

Above Asyoot, the Nile runs along with the Arabian chain for some distance ; and we had an opportunity of observing the wonderful variety in the aspect of these mountains, now sandy and now rocky, now verdant and again barren and steeply precipitous. Sometimes, bristling with peaks, they seem, as it were, to threaten the river ; but more often they are regularly formed like so many pyramids, displaying with sublime effect those grand sweeping lines, so severe and uniform, after which, no doubt, the long horizontal lines of the monuments of Egypt were modelled. Constantly besieged by the sands of the desert, these mountains are furrowed with arid sand torrents, which pour over their jagged summits, and invade the fertile shores of the Nile, blooming with arbors of oleanders and intersected with gardens. Here and there black dots mark the entrances to some of the thousands upon thousands of sepulchres which the men of ancient

days hollowed out in rocks as receptacles for innumerable mummies of men and of gods.

In the daytime these calcareous mountains are of a grayish color; but in the evening, when the sky glows with all its splendors in honor of the departure of Horus, the Supreme God of Ancient Egypt, the gray limestone is transformed as if by magic. The first lilacs of spring, the early roses clambering along the hedges, are not fresher and more brilliant in their tints than are the hues of violet and of rose which at this hour — in Egypt always solemn and radiant — adorn these mountains. However we may be engaged, whether in business or pleasure, we leave every thing to watch the sunsets, eagerly as people forsake their pursuits, whatever they may be, to rush after kings or heroes.

What indeed can equal the pomp and magnificence of this king of the Orient, as he advances to his western throne, attended by his retinue of purple and golden clouds? His parting smile transfigures the heavens and earth: all nature is illumined by that divine effulgence. The West is a sea of splendor, and to the farthest East the sky blushes and glows in sympathy with its rapture. Troops of bright, tiny clouds are floating

everywhere : near the horizon, like molten stars or glittering fire-flies, they mingle with the fiery dust of the desert ; but as they rise to the zenith, waving innumerable banners, — golden and purple, crimson and exquisite violet, they look like hosts of seraphs or cherubim descending from heaven. The air itself is luminous and rainbow-tinted ; dazzling garlands and crowns gleam forth and dissolve again or change into new forms ; while long, undulating robes, of intensest scarlet, fire-tipped, and glittering with superb reflections — gorgeous as the velvet golden-fringed mantles of queens — lie basking in the quivering blue. Meanwhile huge, massive, luminous clouds, encircled with a rim of fire, are piled up grandly on the horizon's verge : as the star king approaches, these splendid guards, with their blazing helmets and glittering breastplates, draw asunder and close again when he has passed, like the battalions of earthly sovereigns.

Gradually all these gorgeous colors, these crimsons and violets, merge one into the other, and fade away : the west grows dim. A diffused, uniform, yellow gleam overspreads the sky, and this too darkens and deepens, until through the veil of the golden gloom gleams the evening

star. The glory of the sunset has died into the night.

What is the sun of the North, with its pallid, ineffectual rays, to one who has contemplated this glorious southern star, the powerful Horus, the fertilizer of the earth, and supreme God of heaven, that Egypt adores? Our sun is lustreless and lifeless, equally devoid of color and of warmth in comparison. But perhaps we have all that we deserve. In our day, when the gods are dead, and when the goddesses no longer reign save in the museums, when the smoke of progress has driven poetry from the face of the earth, why should we expect that nature will reveal to us all her power and beauty? The heavens are right to withhold their splendors from peoples without faith.

VIII.

THE ARAB KIEF.

THE wind is fair, and we skim lightly before it with all sails spread. Life on the Nile is at once the most monotonous and varied, the most idle and replete with activity, that can be imagined. The changing pictures passing before you are enough to beguile the delightful hours. We mark when the gust of wind strikes the shuddering sail ; note the rows of pelicans standing motionless on their long legs, the groups of fellahines with their bare feet, the Mahometan priest kneeling on the shore ; and now we are passing woods of date-palms that look loftier and more graceful than ever ; the shadoofs, too, are more numerous ; one of us has a lucky shot ; a craft flies by, and yonder is a Bedouin camp ! — Such sights, such simple incidents, are our great events, our important episodes ; filling the mind with images, and stirring the soul with emotion. These pictures, sensible images of a strange life

and a strange world, are quite sufficient, in this delightful, romantic environment, to supply us with food for converse, and matter for endless dreams.

All day long I have abandoned myself to the enjoyment of a voluptuous *kief*, as the Arabs call it, and which is about the same thing as the Italian *far niente*, although even more delightful. Besides the mere pleasure of feeling that you are alive, the delight of being wafted by a friendly breeze under a cloudless sky, of letting yourself sink away into a state of utter repose, — with all this there mingles a sort of Oriental perfume of amber and sandal-wood, a peculiar elation of the mind, a dreamy ecstasy which is quite indescribable. You forget every thing except the present moment, except the fascination it exerts over you : you are withdrawn, isolated from your ordinary life, and enveloped in a cloud of fairy-like enchantment.

The landscape is constantly changing : the mountains are now quite low, and then again tower up against the sky ; villages, protected by their overarching palms, are dotted in swift succession along the shore. Sometimes they are built upon hillocks, but more often stand upon the

very edge of the water, their little mud minarets and battlemented pigeon-houses reflected in the motionless wave. Heedlessly, listlessly, you remark all these things through the smoke of your narguillé: you see every thing that passes, and every thing seems vague, strange, and beautiful. So all things seem to a man stretched upon the deck of his craft, enjoying his kief: half asleep, utterly incapable of thought, he still retains the power of dreaming the most beautiful dreams.

Wherever you see the rude huts of the fellahs, you may know that the ruins of an ancient city are interred. Every village is the tomb of a city.

“No country,” writes Theocritus, who was, perhaps, somewhat of a courtier, “is more fertile than Egypt, when the Nile overflows its low lands, irrigating the saturated soil. No country is richer in great cities, those marvellous creations of men. Of these it contains three times ten thousand, and again three times one thousand, three times one hundred, three times nine, and three times three. Over all these cities Ptolemy reigns.”

The favorable breeze bearing us on rapidly, we pass in swift succession quite a number of towns; among these Aboutig, ancient Aboutis, and Kaou-

el-Kebir, formerly Antæopolis, whose ruins have in great measure been swept away by the Nile ; Sohag, formerly Athribis, where Bahr-Yousef takes its rise ; and Akmin, the Chemmis of old times, famous for its Roman antiquities. Still advancing, we catch a passing glimpse of Menchieh, believed to be ancient Ptolemais ; and Girgeh, near which lie scattered the ruins of Abydos.

In Akmin, the Copts own a very ancient Catholic Church : they are numerous in this city, and exert considerable influence. I have not yet spoken of this people although they constitute an important part of the Egyptian population. The Copt, and not the fellah, who did not come to Egypt until at the time of the conquest of Amron, is the true child of this soil : he is the descendant of the old Egyptian, and having been prohibited by his religion from intermarrying with the conquering race he has retained perfect resemblance to the old type, as we see it in mummies, and in the figures painted upon tombs and monuments. The Copts have flat foreheads, prominent cheek-bones, eyes long and oblique, and short, flat noses ; the mouth is large, and the ear is placed high on the head, — a peculiarity characteristic of the

ancient race. They are well-educated and intelligent; are often employed as scribes, and have a great aptitude for business and commerce. In Cairo they have a quarter of their own, where numbers of them live; and they are found everywhere throughout Egypt.

IX.

STOLEN NOTES.

YOU may have imagined hitherto, my dear Etienne, that discretion is a virtue ; but this is a mistake. I feel an actual remorse for my too great reserve in this regard. The fact is, that our friend Joseph has allowed me the privilege of seeing his journal ; and sometimes, with his permission, I have drawn upon it a little for my own advantage. But, as it is only right to render to Joseph the things that are Joseph's, I shall try and quiet my conscience by committing now a slight act of indiscretion.

Without permission, therefore, I shall take the liberty of copying the notes he has been jotting down to-day, and of sending them to you. It is to be hoped that he will not be mortally incensed ; and, in any event, I am sure that you will undertake my defence.

“The fiery sun has just disappeared, sinking beneath the desert horizon. The moon looks

forth directly over our heads, but with a vague, uncertain light; her glory still veiled by the last reflections of the sunset. Where her silver crescent shines, the firmament is of a deep, dark blue: imperceptibly it becomes softer and more dim as it recedes from that luminous centre. In the sparkling waves of the river are reflected alike the dazzling and quiet hues of the heavenly vault arching over it, and with all its infinitely varying shades undergoing every instant the most marvellous transformations.

“The plain embraced between the Nile and the mountains gradually becomes less verdant as it stretches towards the east. A great fire seems to have been kindled in the distance: the gaunt, massive cliffs shutting in the horizon are transfigured with an exquisite rosy flush.

“The western sky, a sheet of molten gold, is intersected by a high causeway, whose deeply shadowed flanks, dark even to blackness, look all the more gloomy from the contrast with the splendor overhead. A small, thick clump of dark, green trees surges up above the horizon with most picturesque effect: through its intertwining branches and woven leaves shoot arrows of flame.

“ We have stopped now at Girgeh, and are fortunate to have a view of it at this hour. The slender turrets of the minarets and shafts of the palms, their forms standing out with marvellous clearness, are relieved against the golden background of the sky. The smallest indentations of the little battlemented pigeon-houses can be distinctly traced: the mud hovels, standing on the edge of the river, look as if made of black ebony. Through the ogival arches of an elegant mosque, half destroyed by the devouring waters of the Nile, faintly gleams the evening light; while the bank beneath, hollowed out by the water, is buried in deepest shade. On the top of the bank stands the city, undermined by the current, crumbling away, looking like a place taken by assault: its strange appearance adds to the magical effect of the whole scene. A few sails are still visible, outlined upon the sky, and tremulously reflected in the tremulous waves.

“ The wharf, meanwhile, is a scene of great commotion. The people indeed we cannot well make out: some strange, Chinese-looking figures, showing like black blotches against the bright horizon, are the only human beings visible. But the air resounds with the shrieks of thousands of voices and the howls of packs of dogs.

“Before long we are wafted out of sight of the city, and these sounds die away. I can hear nothing now but the sougling of the water under the boat, and the shuddering of the sail as it is puffed out by a gust of wind. The landscape is indistinctly seen by the light of the moon. We approach the Arabian mountains, and then again are swept away from them; and now suddenly, with a tremendous shock, run forward upon a sand-bank. The sailors jump into the water and try to heave off the boat; but all their efforts are in vain, and, giving it up at last, they climb back over the gunwales. We must put our trust in Providence: our lodging for the night is found.”

X.

THE GHAZEYAH.

ON Sunday, the 5th of March, we landed at the port of Keneh, just at dusk, and having letters to deliver to the consular agent started at once for the city, which is half a league from the Nile. There is no twilight in Egypt: it grows dark immediately after sunset; so that this night expedition over a heavy, sandy road, was far from being agreeable. We took Micaeli with us as a guide; and two sailors, armed with good substantial walking-sticks, for an escort; and dragged along as well as we could, running up against palm-trees and swallowing dust.

On reaching the town, we found the streets silent and deserted. The people had already shut themselves up in their brick houses, and no one was to be seen except some few stragglers squatting on the door-steps, or leaning against the walls, as they smoked their pipes; and some five or six bare-breasted soldiers seated at the door of a

mosque, under a large tree. Our guides led us through an actual labyrinth of streets to a house of quite fine appearance, embellished with a gilded coat-of-arms.

Our entrance seemed to make quite a sensation. Some young boys, clerks or other subordinates ; two or three stately-looking old gentlemen, with venerable beards ; and some cavasses, with painted eyes and terrible mustachios, — started up, and falling into position saluted us. Soon a secretary came forward, and opening a side door conducted us to our host, a distinguished Copt, the consular agent of France, and wealthiest merchant in the city. We found him dressed with great elegance, and seated upon a silken divan, in a small but handsome room, lighted by two flickering lamps suspended by chains from the vaulted ceiling. The agent was really a distinguished-looking man, thin, with a high, bald forehead, a long, hooked nose, an intelligent eye, and a smile that might almost be called sarcastic. His expression was dignified ; and he had even a certain look of severity, which was perhaps due to his black turban. After glancing through our letters, and greeting us with the usual compliments, he clapped his hands in the Oriental style, and gave rapid

orders to the servants who came forward. Every thing was in commotion, slaves hurried to and fro, and formed a sort of torch-light procession.

Followed by his people, the consul conducted us across a court; and, ascending a stairway with a sculptured balustrade, we entered a large and brilliantly lighted saloon furnished with Oriental luxury. Smyrna carpets; Damascus hangings, covered with interminable arabesques woven of the richest colors; large and low luxurious divans, lined with heavy, rustling satin; chandeliers of bizarre shape, and curiously carved furniture,—invited inspection. Before we had grown weary of admiring all these fine and curious objects, some pipe-bearers came in, bringing chibouks eight feet long; each slave presenting one to some member of the party, on half-bended knee. Nothing could have been more costly than these chibouks; they were wrapped in tissue of gold and silver; the amber mouth-pieces were enormous; and the richly gilded bowls, burning the finest Levant tobacco mingled with Arabian perfumes, rested upon the floor upon small copper plates. The well-kindled fire was already glowing; and as we began smoking luxuriously, and the light bluish wreaths floated up to the ceiling, the room was pervaded

with a strong odor of sandal-wood. Meanwhile, some picturesque-looking black slaves, dressed in white tunics, passed around plates of bon-bons, liqueurs, and Arabian pastry. Two old Arabian women, weird and haggard, came in, and seated themselves in the corner. The musicians tuned up their instruments, and the Ghazeeyah made their appearance.

This was the first glimpse we had had of these famous dancing girls; and we looked at them, of course, with great curiosity. They promenaded around the room, with slow, measured steps; and then one of them, who wore a sort of tunic of changeable silk, embroidered with green flowers, and displaying perfectly the outlines of her figure, came and sat down by my side. Her hair, which was immensely long and heavy, was entwined with strings of sequins, so arranged as to form a sort of small sparkling helmet upon her forehead, while falling over her shoulders like a splendid, sonorous mane. Tawdry necklaces of glass beads and piastres glittered on her neck and breast; and her waist was clasped with a broad silver belt, from which depended little bells, which the slightest movement was sufficient to set ringing; her arms and ankles were adorned with showy bracelets, and her fingers loaded with rings.

If I, for my part, felt curious about the Ghazee-yah, she seemed to regard me as no less deserving remark; and for a time we examined each other with mutual curiosity. But soon, after putting my watch to her ear like a child, and showing a special interest in my sleeve-buttons, she seemed satisfied with her inspection, and called upon me to admire her costume in all its details.

In this houris of Mahomet's paradise I saw before me a striking specimen of the pure type of Egyptian beauty. Nothing was wanting: the large almond-shaped eyes made to appear still larger by the line of antimony prolonging the outer angle, the slightly sunken cheeks, the somewhat flat nose, the complexion of a golden opal, were all perfectly reproduced. She was the living embodiment of the figures of Isis or Cleopatra, which we see painted upon the walls of temples, with rows of their Egyptian subjects presenting them with lotus-flowers.

Regularly beautiful as a marble statue, all that was wanting in her face was soul: it was as lifeless as a painted image, for it expressed nothing but mere voluptuousness. You could read no other sentiment in her eyes or upon her features,

—nothing but voluptuousness, and the look of vapid stupidity which is produced by the use of hashish ; the apathy, the impassibility, that utter absence of thought and of passion which Delacroix has so well expressed in his *chef d'œuvre*, the “Femmes d’Algers.”

The consular agent, who had seated himself upon a divan, with a stout *bon-vivant*, dressed in a complete suit of yellow, by his side, entertained us with great amiability. On being introduced to his friend, the enormous canary, to whom he seemed very much devoted, we learned that he was a cousin of the agent, and an officer in the service of the viceroy. He had visited France in the suite of Säid Pacha, but had acquired nothing of the language of Corneille, except some five or six tremendous oaths,—enough to have scared off all the soldiers of France and Navarre. He repeated them for us amiably, with his hand upon his heart. These oaths were all that he had brought from our beautiful country,—these and the cross of the Legion of Honor. Great heavens! Is this an example of the exquisite culture and refinement to obtain which strangers throng to Paris? It is strange ; but when *La Belle Hélène* proves an

irresistible attraction to sovereigns, why wonder that agas should frequent the *demi-monde* to learn good manners?

But I must not forget the Ghazeeyah. The musicians beat the thundering tar, the rabáb and tarabuba sent forth shrill eries, and rising they prepared for their dance.

Travellers have described and painters have painted this dance of the Ghazeeyah so often, that it is needless for me to say any thing about it; more especially, as I must confess that this far too expressive pantomime did not seem to me either graceful or even extravagantly seductive. The girls are supple as serpents, and do every thing that can be done in the way of contorting their limbs and jerking their muscles: they squirm, they leap, toss their arms, throw themselves backwards, writhe on the floor, and keep constantly — whatever the movement may be — clashing their castanets and ringing their bells. This is all the famous dance amounts to:—a mere gymnastic, there is no grace of movement in it, and nothing that can properly be called dancing. What pleasure can there be in beholding these awkward contortions of the body, this incessant writhing and vibrating and quivering, sometimes

languishing and lascivious, and then again impetuous and fiery?

One must be a Turk, I imagine, to enjoy such a spectacle, in which lust, — without even pretending to seek an excuse or shielding veil, — lust open and avowed, plays the all-important part.

Infinitely preferable to these creatures is the poor little fellahine, trudging along the dusty roads, in all her poverty and misery. Nothing frightens her so much as seeing a stranger. Dressed in a simple blue chemise, her water-jug upon her shoulder, her great black eyes all brilliant with surprise flashing out through the folds of the ragged veil half covering her face, she flees in terror as soon as any one approaches, and does not stop even to turn back — curiosity overcoming her terror — until she has reached quite a distance. But what a picture she forms at that moment, standing unconsciously in some grand attitude that recalls the poses of the basket-bearers of the sacred processions!

One day, when I was walking on the sandy shore of the Nile, with half a dozen chevaliers fluttering about on the water's edge for my companions, I saw some young Egyptian girls, with their faces uncovered, laughing, romping, run-

ning races in the wind. On seeing me, the terrified party took flight. One alone, who happened to be in advance of the others, proceeded heedlessly to the river. Tucking up her garment, she waded into the water up to her knees, washed her vase and filled it. I stopped to look at her, and when she turned, seeking for her companions, wanted to assist her in replacing it upon her head ; but she dropped her veil with all haste, and slipped lightly away, leaving her jug upon the shore.

Nothing could be more graceful and enticing than this little peasant, with her wild shyness and childlike terror ; and, on the other hand, it would be difficult to find any thing more stupid and repulsive than the Ghazeeyahs, with their grimaces and contortions, their silk robes, their jingling pieces of money and gilded belts.

Tired alike of the dance and the dancers, we invited the consular agent to dine with us on the next day, and broke up the sitting. In the street we found grooms holding saddled horses and carrying torches, and with this brilliant escort returned quickly to the dahabieh.

XI.

DENDEREH.

EARLY the next morning we landed on the left shore of the river, and bestriding our fleet little donkeys galloped off to Denderéh, formerly Tentyris.

The temple of the Goddess Athos, which is the great attraction in this place, although built at a period of decadence, is wonderfully impressive, especially if it is the first of these old Egyptian temples that you have seen.

The portico is beyond description grand and imposing: it is supported by twenty-four colored columns, surmounted by capitals richly ornamented, but curious in design,—the heads of women with heifer's ears. Walls, columns, capitals, and ceilings are all profusely covered with hieroglyphics and sculptures, in an astonishing state of preservation: time has not even marred the brightness of the colors. From the portico you pass into a series of halls, which lead finally to

the Adytum, an isolated sanctuary surrounded by a corridor containing six doors, which communicate with other rooms. The ceiling of the Adytum was formerly adorned with the celebrated zodiac that was carried to Paris, where it gave rise to so much learned controversy among *savants*. There are several large figures of Cleopatra on the outer surface of the wall.

After examining this curious and grand monument to our hearts' content, and visiting the typhonium and the temple of Isis, we went back to the craft for breakfast, when I, for my part, proceeded to Keneh.

Situated on the direct route of the caravans that go to and from Kossayr, one of the ports of the Red Sea, Keneh is one of the largest and most important of the cities of Upper Egypt. It is full of busy, animated bazaars, and is the centre of a flourishing trade. It is a great rallying point for numbers of Mecca pilgrims, who meet here every year, and organize their pilgrimages; and it has also the honor of being the capital of the province, and residence of a pacha.

It is in Keneh, and a neighboring village called Ballas, that those large porous water-jars, known in this country of thirst from the earliest antiquity,

and constituting an important branch of Egyptian trade, are manufactured. They are called Bal-lasée, from the village ; and sometimes also goul-lèhs or zirhs. The clay of which they are made is so excessively porous as to admit of constant evaporation of the liquid they contain, which is thus kept at an astonishingly low temperature. Thanks to this simple contrivance, cold water is always to be had in this excessively hot country.

The people here weave these jars together with branches, firmly attach several layers of them superimposed one over the other, and so construct enormous rafts. Five or six men mount upon this primitive structure, and it is floated down the Nile to Cairo, where the merchandise is disposed of in the markets of the metropolis.

Staring, and being stared at in my turn, lounging through the bazaars, studying types, faces, costumes, losing my way and finding it again, — and, above all, seeking everywhere for a little shade, — I strolled carelessly through the busy town.

While thus innocently beguiling the time, a curious object met my view as I turned the corner of a street. In one word, it was a woman mag-

nificently dressed in crimson satin, sitting cross-legged on a piece of ragged matting at the door of a mud hovel: gold sequins shone in her hair, and large showy necklaces dangled over her breast. I looked into the hut: the walls were bare, and the bare ground was only partially covered with a villanous old matting. The woman lifted her large dark eyes with a smile, and I recognized the dancing girl of the previous evening.

Nor was she the only houris visible. I now remarked several of these women in the immediate neighborhood, each more showily dressed than the other, sleeping, eating, or smoking, in full view at the doors of their houses. Evidently, I had stumbled upon the quarter of the Ghazeeyah. I hurried by with a feeling of infinite disgust, and took the road leading back to the dahabieh.

On reaching the wharf, I saw that something unusual had happened. Every thing was in confusion. Troops of soldiers in Turkish slippers were talking with excited vehemence, some were hastily embarking, while others were erecting pieces of artillery with which the ground was strewn. People were running hither and thither, donkeys loaded with provisions were coming and

departing, &c. Meanwhile, in a hastily erected tent, some officers were issuing orders.

I had scarcely got aboard the dahabieh, when I was closely followed by a police agent, who came to inquire whether we were proposing to go down the Nile. He informed us that a revolution had just broken out at Girgeh, and that the most active measures were being taken to suppress it. The pacha of Kenh, at the head of three thousand men, had started promptly for the scene of action; and the viceroy had sent several regiments from Cairo. It was impossible to know as yet what dimensions the revolt would assume, but the policeman reiterated that we must not think of going down the Nile. We might, however, go on to the south without danger.

At this moment Micaeli joined in the discussion: in the most lugubrious tone he stated that he had already heard the news in the city, but had not dared tell us about it.

We did not know what to think, and could talk of nothing but the revolution, since there had really been a revolution, while waiting impatiently to hear what the vice-consul would have to say on the subject. He arrived at about six o'clock with the great canary bird, the magnificent

chevalier of the Legion of Honor, still by his side, and followed by a numerous escort of horses and janissaries.

Salutations and compliments concluded, we entered upon the great subject of the day; and the consul confirmed the news brought by the policeman. He had just attended the pacha to his craft, and had seen him depart. He seemed to think that order would soon be re-established, probably in a week or two, and assured us that we would run no risk in continuing our voyage.

Relieved on this score, we could think of more cheerful matters. Nicolo passed round curaçoa and coffee, and we took our seats at the table.

I must confess that Micaeli did himself more than justice on this great occasion: his three kinds of sweetmeats were highly appreciated; and such was the vivacity of his champagne, that a taste of it made us forget all about the rebellion. We discussed the great interests of France, Egypt, and Suez; we smoked our chibouks, sipped our curaçoa and coffee, became more enthusiastic and Oriental than ever in our courtly, flowery compliments, and parted the best of friends. Our fat *bon-vivant* was so taken up with his dinner that he mercifully spared us his litany of oaths.

Scarcely had our guests departed, when Abouset came on board from the shore, looking as pale as a black man can: he was really in a great fright. A craft which we had met near Girgeh had not only been pillaged, but the travellers, dragomen, and part of the crew, had been massacred: this was the information he brought. The sailors were dumb with horror. We made light of Abouset's story, declaring that it must be a false report, or at least exaggerated. And yet when we remembered that only two days before we had intended stopping at Girgeh for the sake of visiting Abydos, and had only been prevented from doing so by the lateness of the hour, we could not help feeling a certain emotion.

The wind was fair. We hoisted our anchor, and made sail towards Luqsor. It was now eleven o'clock in the evening.

XII.

ARTISTS AND THE ORIENT.

WE are approaching Thebes, and since early in the morning have been standing upon the terrae with our eyes fastened upon the south. Impatient, speechless, we can remember nothing but our eagerness to behold the city of a hundred gates.

At about noon, we caught our first glimpse of Luqsor.

It is really a solemn moment, that in which you gaze for the first time upon this vast tomb of the past, — this broad plain, so silent and deserted, that lies outstretched before you on each side of the Nile ; this field of death covered with temples, obelisks, colonnades, sphinxes, colossi, — with so many grand ruins, motionless, majestic in their venerable decay.

“ With mournful wrecks the mournful plain is strown : —
The palace overturned, the throne o’erthrown,
The broken sceptre, withered laurel crown.” ¹

¹ Racine.

When the French army were marching upon Thebes, they gave a striking proof of their enthusiasm and admiration of this wonderful scene. Struck by the grandeur and magnificence of the ruins, they stopped short with one impulse and fired a salute. Yonder is Karnac, its dark, massive pile relieved against the grayish tints of the Arabian mountains. On the right hand, a little farther to the south, is Medenet Haboo, and the tombs of the valley of kings; and then comes Luqsor with its capitals, like immense stemless lotus-flowers blooming in mid air, stretching in a straight line along the shore.

Among the four crafts moored at the quay, one carries a French flag. As we arrive, it greets us with a salute of six guns: we reply with our guns and revolvers, and shake hands with our countrymen.

The wind blows fresh from the north. Almost regretting even this necessary delay, we despatch a letter to the representative of Prussia; and, as soon as our messenger returns, fly on with all sails spread, and with a dazzling vision impressed for ever upon our memory.

But who can anticipate the vagaries of *Æolus*? The wind soon dies away. Slow and languid as

the heavy flight of a wounded bird, the breeze that lingers has scarcely strength to waft us gently to a little village, where we shall be obliged to pass the night.

Great heavens ! to what a God-forsaken spot fate has drifted us ! The village is frightful, consisting of black, filthy, dilapidated, gloomy-looking mud-hovels. The ground is uncultivated, and of a gray, melancholy color. The children are stark naked ; the fields are parched ; the dogs have no skins ; the palm-trees no palms ; and nothing else is to be seen except some old women who have not even the grace to wear veils.

Even on the enchanting shores of the Nile, such disenchanting spectacles are frequently to be seen. And what indeed should we do without them, timely stations as they are, where we can stop admiring for a while, give over the weary strain of ravishment, rest for a few minutes, recuperate our flagging enthusiasm ; and by comparing it with a different scene, by the very violence of this contrast, learn to appreciate and admire beauty as never before ? Sameness is death to enthusiasm.

Most melancholy land ! I thank Heaven that I have forgotten your name.

And yet scarcely had we moored our craft to

the shore when there was a change. The sun dropped suddenly down behind the white tents of a camp of Bedouins; and there we all were going into ecstasies over a wonderful group of cabins lighted up by the splendors of the west, glowing under the crowned heads of golden palms, and seeming to float in a hollow vale of liquid fire. The whole scene, too, was reflected in the smooth waters of the Nile.

“That lovely plain, those hills that gleam,
A vision in the mirroring water seem!”

A dazzling vision of glory for a brief while: the village is now again nothing but a collection of hideous, repulsive-looking mud hovels!

Such is the magical effect of light! It transfigures whatever it touches: it beautifies the most horrible ugliness, effaces defects and imperfections, and over all sorts of crudities and nakedness casts a veil. Fair Aurora, with her rosy fingers, clothes squalid poverty with the most marvellous hues; while the setting sun does not disdain to transform rags and tatters into fringes of gold. The whole earth is dazzled with his splendor; and objects in reality hideous, seen in the light of his smile, seem beautiful and enticing.

Say, if you choose, that appearances are deceitful : what does it matter ? If illusions please me, why destroy them ? Why persist in tearing off the fair garment of seeming from the cold, dull, painful, commonplace reality ? I pity the man who has no illusions, for he is deprived of an infinite source of enjoyment. He does not know how delightful it is to cherish, fondle, caress, build up with all the power of your imagination, some dear thought, some hidden dream, no matter how chimerical it may be, — he does not know what happiness this imparts. Believing in illusions is one way of hoping, and the best way ; for, besides the enjoyment which hope promises, and can only promise, your illusions afford you actual enjoyment in the present. If the future is to convict me of error, do not at least rob me of the satisfaction of anticipation. At present I ought to be able to judge ; for I am in the land of illusions, — the land of illusions and of light.

Divine light, with what magnificent prodigality it casts its magical spell over this marvellous Orient ! The Orient, it is another name for light ! Whether it inundates the fields or inflames the desert ; whether tremulously glittering it plays over the waters of the Nile, or flecks the rounded

branches of the date-palms ; whether it etherealizes the white, gleaming mountains, or paints with purple and gold the horizon : its effulgence and the warm golden hues with which it bathes the atmosphere are beyond any thing conceived of in other lands.

It is diffused, shifting, of a soft, creamy quality ; silky, as it were, and full of contrasts. Sometimes intensely strong, it throws sharply defined lights and shadows, and then again shades off in an infinite variety of the most ethereally delicate and exquisitely blended hues.

The atmosphere is so transparent and free from vapor that, as in void space, there is nothing to interfere with the vision. The grand, sweeping outlines of the mountains stand out sharp and distinct against the dark, blue sky ; and, deceived by the astonishing clearness, the limpidity of the air, you lose all perception of distances, the most remote objects seem in your immediate vicinity.

At first the Orient impresses you most strangely : it seems a land of dust all aflame with a brilliance of transcendent coloring. But you must study it. For this is a theme that every one interprets in his own fashion : it is a hieroglyphic that the whole world is trying to decipher. Each

new observer wants to wrest his secret from the old sphinx, and can only catch, after all, some faint gleam, some single aspect of his multiple and fleeting beauties. We all look at the East from a different point of view. Certain impressions more or less vivid, profound, and durable, are made upon the mind; and the traveller, whether poet or painter, whether author or mere tourist, will not only try to describe with accuracy and fidelity what he has seen, — the mosque, city, or landscape he has been contemplating, — he will endeavor, above all, to idealize his work. I do not use this word, however, in the sense in which it is often understood, — that of beautifying, embellishing. No. Let him be as realistic, as much of a Pre-Raphaelite as you choose, he will try none the less to express what he has felt. He will not be satisfied until his canvas or his paper reproduces his impressions, his emotions. His end will be not merely to copy nature, but to interpret it; to touch other souls with the sentiment with which his own soul is filled.

The Orient has been a source of inspiration to our greatest artists, but each one of them has seen it in the light of his own genius. The grand

level horizon views, the severe outlines of the landscape, the splendid desolation of the desert, the violent contrasts between the lights and shadows, the warm coloring and divine sun,—these are the features of the East by which one mind will be principally impressed. His whole effort will be to convey an idea of these characteristics; and, by using freely the darkest shadows, he will, perhaps, succeed in imprisoning a little sunshine. Was not this Rembrandt's method? Was not this the plan he adopted in painting "The Pilgrims of Eumeus"?

Another will be more interested in the human figure. He will study types, faces, costumes; his effort will be to seize and embody in art the picturesqueness, the freedom of movement, style, and grace, for which the people of the Orient are so remarkable. Study carefully one of Gerome's pictures. What exquisite appreciation of his subject! What grace, what perfection of style, in the most minute details!

In this country of sunshine, shade is not only a luxury, but a necessity. The narrow, winding streets are covered with matting or canvas, and look at first, in comparison with the brilliant daylight, dim and even quite dark. But, as soon as

you enter the apparent gloom, you discover that it is, in fact, completely permeated with a soft, dreamy, diffused light, and that over every object moving in this luminous medium is shed warm, golden hues.

It was in this brilliant penumbra that Gerome sought his models and studied his effects. Touched by his master hand, the ragged beggar, the old-clothes man, the wandering peddler, are transformed into grand and profoundly suggestive ideals: they arrest attention, arouse curiosity, and seem made to inspire the artist. Beggars especially, with their rags glittering like tinsel in this radiant atmosphere, are wonderfully majestic: their peculiar costume seems superb and even regal. Weird and theatrical, draped in rags and bathed in golden light, — this whole marvellous world indeed, and every being it contains, seems just to have started from some dream of the “Arabian Nights.”

Genius, race, character, will be the inspiration of the third artist. The Orient for him will mean the Arab. That strange human being, with all the contrasts that make up his character, with his wonderful persistency of development, — his qualities and even manners are to this very day

exactly what they were in the time of Hagar and Ishmael, — will be his theme. Indifferent and impassioned, generous and avaricious, fiery in courage, and a poltroon in cowardice; inviolably faithful to his oath, and craftily cunning; proverbial alike for his hospitality and his robberies, — the Arab is the same in all ages. This singular individuality the painter will study and will embody it in art.

Look at one of Fromentin's pictures, and see how he makes his steeds fly through the air, shaking their manes, and with their superb necks haughtily arched. What fire, what impetuosity, what movement, in his fantastic designs! — bournous whirl, guns wave; you hear hurrahs, shots; pleasure becomes fury; the riders, standing in their large stirrups, are drunk with air and space, intoxicated with this wild race; the horses, with their proud heads, smoking flanks, flying hoofs, tails sweeping the ground, share their masters' enthusiasm, and bear them on in a lightning gallop. What delirium! what fury! what an orgie of movement, — the clashing of arms, shouts, tumult; the flash of glaring colors, a whirling chaos, a storm of dust, — and all seen in a limpid atmosphere, bathed with the splendid colors of the Orient!

In the midst of this flash of lightning, this fleeting vision ; athwart all this intangible rage and speed, Fromentin catches on the wing, as it were, the character of the children of Ishmael. The Arab's passion for liberty, — it sweeps by you like the wind ; you burn with their ardor ; you comprehend their fiery imagination, their enthusiasm for battle ; you breathe the aerid perfumes of this virgin soil, to which no human being can lay claim, and feel suddenly a new impulse born within you, — the boundless love, the passion of the nomad for his desert.

Lastly, still a third artist has seen what is really greatest in the East, — humanity. He paints ideas, passions : his pictures are pages of history, and full of eloquence and philosophy. Thoroughly penetrated with his subject, he expresses it in a language of pictured images, which speaks to the very soul.

Bold, audacious in carrying out his thought, he lavishes color with the magnificence of a prodigal. For local truth he cares little ; for he knows that the end of art is expression, and that to attain this end the best are the simplest means. He dreams, feels, conceives, and with wonderful genius gives form to his impressions. A paint-

ing by his hand is a drama that thrills, moves, troubles, and arouses.

Remember “*La Noce Juive au Maroc*” or “*Les Femmes d’Alger.*” Have you ever meditated upon their meaning? Have you ever thought how wonderfully they sum up the whole history of the Ishmaelites? The very spirit of the East confronts you as you gaze upon them; you think of all its strange customs, its harems, its utter absence of progress, its stationary civilization; you see before you its so beautiful and wretched peoples, degraded by despotism, besotted with pride, luxury, and sloth, and paralyzed by fatalism. They are a concrete Orient.

The foregoing, my dear friend, is neither more nor less than a rapid sketch of a long discussion we have been having this evening, apropos of the village I told you about. Take it for what it is worth. You will say, perhaps, and with justice, that I am talking upon subjects of the very first principles of which I am ignorant. But please to remark that I do not set myself up as a judge, or wish to do so. Only one conclusion would I draw from all that has been said; and that is, that this old Sphinx the East has more than one secret; that all the harvests of this

fertile soil have not yet been gathered in. This is true of literature no less than of art: the latest comers may still hope to glean a few ears of corn.

XIII.

E S N E.

HERE we are at Esne, once known as Latopolis. It lies directly upon the shores of the Nile, whose corroding waves are gradually washing it away. In the southern part of the town stand the barracks, a large white building, called pompously the palace: it was built by Mehemit Ali, and is nearly hidden, fortunately for the landseape, by dense masses of foliage. The city looks poverty-stricken, the bazaars are dull, the great square is dirty; and yonder are some dyers, drying long slips of blue linen in the sun. I ought also to mention, perhaps, a pretentious-looking white-washed mud minaret.

A narrow lane leads to the temple, or rather to the site of what was once a temple. The portico is all that is left to tell of its past glory: it is almost buried in sand, and you descend to it by a dilapidated mud staircase. Mud huts stand against the frieze, and the enclosure has recently

been converted into a store-house for grain. The portico bears a striking resemblance to the one at Denderah, and indeed they were built at the same epoch: *savants* have found inscribed upon its walls the names of the Ptolemies. The ceiling is supported by twenty-four limestone columns, and is ornamented by a very remarkable zodiac. The columns are covered with hieroglyphics very much injured, while the capitals are adorned with lotus or palm leaves.

Here, as in Keneh, a special district is appropriated to the Ghazeeyah. Their huts stand on a low hill, somewhat to the south, among some clumps of languishing palm-trees, that by no means suggest the gardens of delight of Mahomet's paradise. Here these houris, who are far from being irresistible, sit at their doors, trying to attract the people who pass, and inviting them to behold their dance. Thanks: we have seen it already *satis superque*.

On the wharf, too, they are frequently to be seen; hanging about the taverns with their roofs of dry leaves, where soldiers are always singing and carousing. Whether young or old, fresh with bloom or wrinkled with decay, hideous or magnificent, these women, in a certain sense, all look

alike. They can always be recognized, no matter how different in other respects, by their dull, apathetic expression, and cynical smile, their slow, trailing walk, and passion for glaring colors. The Ghazeeyah do not wear veils. How strong is habit! What a tyrant is custom! Who of us can resist its sway? Can you believe that this absence of the veil is almost as shocking to us now as was the wearing of it at first? An Egyptian woman with her face uncovered, — it is like meeting a girl in Paris with a cigar in her mouth!

Back of the town extends an immense plain, which is literally covered with game: quails were flying about in all directions.

Returning to the craft, we met the crew decked out in their Sunday best, — red kaftans with blue tassels, striped yellow and white turbans, baggy white trousers tied at the knee, and Turkish slippers. To do them justice, they were superb. You know what a passion Arabs have for show and finery! Several of the men have on some old gold-embroidered waistcoats, cast-off relics of *bric-à-brac*, of which they were intensely proud: the others look much more elegant, to my mind, in the small white vest, with long

flowing sleeves, that belongs to their costume. The sleeves are tied in a knot in the back of the neck.

Need I explain that Esne is a place full of allurements, of snares in which the sailor is only too glad to be entangled. We had to promise them a bottle of arakee before they would consent to set sail.

The air is singularly oppressive; the sky is overcast; the sun plunges down behind a heavy bank of lead-colored clouds, changing at the edges to a dull red, and disappears without any of his usual display. Soon we feel the scorching breath of the desert: the burning blast continues to blow in dry, suffocating whiffs. It is growing more and more sultry, and Micaeli predicts a sirocco; but luckily he is not a prophet.

XIV.

NUBIAN GAMES.

THE fiery wind did not last ; but the atmosphere ever since has been lifeless and oppressive. Heavy, sad-looking clouds hang low over the sky ; the Nile flows with a restless, uneasy motion ; all Nature looks dull and gray, as if she had been drugged, and had fallen into a stupor. Not a breath is stirring ; and yet every now and then a tremendous flapping is heard among the sails, as when a dying bird beats its wings.

Timsah ! Timsah ! Mustapha, the pilot, has just pointed out to us the first crocodile we have seen. There it lies outstretched on an island near by, its tail coiled in tortuous folds. While we were gazing at the hideous beast, it got up slowly, and began trailing along the sand ; but, startled by the sound of the craft, slipped back into the water and disappeared.

Night coming on, we were obliged to stop at a small desert island. We went ashore on the back of the reis. The crew were in high spirits, and we agreed to let them spend the evening in their own fashion. They promised us one of their national entertainments. It opened with leaps, dances, and their usual hoarse, wild shouts : races, somersets, all sorts of games, and trials of strength and agility followed. It was quite a burlesque drama, and well arranged. The smooth white sand took the place of a carpet, and the trunk of a fallen date-palm was a more regal seat than the most luxurious arm-chairs : as for our lights, the moon did not forget his lantern.

Abonset, dignified as one of Homer's more famous heroes, presided over the games. Giving the signals, haranguing the combatants, naming the victors, awarding prizes, and inflicting penalties, he was the central figure of the scene : the crew, meanwhile, — wrestlers, racers, and clowns (they enacted all parts by turns, and equally well), — revolved about him. I wish I could paint for you their savage, extravagant performances. Sometimes, at a given signal, they would stretch out in a line, and rush forward, like a flock of black crows flying off at the report of a gun ;

sometimes they closed up in a little knot, and pushed, thrust, pressed against each other, in an indiscriminate hug. This was kept up until they all tumbled down in a heap, and rolled pell-mell on the sand. And then the roars of laughter were like claps of thunder: the very air was shaken with their hurrahs, and deep, tremendous gasps, inhalations, and snortings.

The prizes, as you can readily imagine, were not at all Homeric. No richly chased goblets nor finely wrought brass buckles, nor even the skin of a lion, — a well earned prize captured in the Libyan desert, — could we boast of. Our heroes had to be contented with very modest tribute, — some few piastres from our pockets, and (may the Prophet pardon us!) some few little glasses of arakee.

For a long time I sat on the shore of this desert island, gazing at these half-naked savages, these statues in ebony, with their slender waists, sphinx-like heads, and large, open nostrils. Supple, vigorous, agile, and streaming with sweat and sand, I watched them leaping and bounding over the smooth beach. The evening, although still a little sultry, was clear and calm. The Nile seemed drowsy: its sleepy waves were

curiously flecked with white blotches of moonlight.

It was ten o'clock when we returned to the craft and took supper. Looking at the thermometer, we saw that it was twenty-six degrees.

XV.

THE NAMELESS VILLAGE.

LITTLE headway can we make, with only this lulling breeze to help us on. I take my gun, and go ashore pigeon shooting. How thoroughly Oriental is the scene! Hillocks of pulverized rubbish, débris of all kinds, which it is a difficult matter to avoid, line the shore. While wandering about in the neighborhood, I came upon a little village half buried in dust, at the foot of the Arabian Hills, — a village bare as the rock, poverty-stricken as the desert, so utterly forlorn that the mere sight of it fills me with compassion. Even the palm, that faithful companion of the fellah, the protector of his hearth, has abandoned these deserted shores. Not a green thing relieves the parched desolation of the desert; not a single tree sheds over the lonely huts its precious gifts of fruit and shade. As for the wretched inhabitants, they have not even rags

to cover them. The children who come prowling about us are stark naked. Children did I say? With their big stomachs, tottering limbs, and dusky, dust-begrimed complexions; with their eyes, nostrils, and mouths (excuse me for entering into such details) black with flies,—these poor little wretches are scarcely like human beings. As soon as we advance, they run away in terror. There is one albino, I notice, among these young savages: he looks somewhere about fifteen, and with his dead-white complexion offers a singular contrast to his bronze-hued companions.

On leaving the village, I remembered the old Arab proverb: “Where a Turk has set his foot, no blade of grass will grow.”

I ought to apologize, my dear friend, for sending you all these frivolous, and I fear monotonous, details,—these mere personal recollections, rough sketches, off-hand descriptions, which should rather be called suggestions than descriptions. But no matter: the fact is that I want to forget for a while hieroglyphics and mummies, those ruins of the pride of men and wealth of cities, and to chat with you carelessly of any thing that comes into my mind,—the nameless village,

the date-palm, the fellahine, the idle dreams of my idle, my lost days.

Do you remember what M. Ampère, who is not only a *savant*, but a poet and philosopher as well, says upon this subject ?

“ Our lost days,” he writes, “ on returning from our travels, how rich in experience, how full of meaning, we find them to be ! They teach us our most important lessons. It will not do to be constantly studying and preoccupied when you are travelling, for in that case you will not see or comprehend the actual world. The mind must be passive, inactive, in order to receive a true impression of external objects.”

Let me, then, talk to you as I choose of my thoughts, my dreams, of the images, the impressions that have come to me unbidden. Seated in the shadow of this fluttering sail, gazing upon the changing landscape, let me try and jot down some few idle images that will remind me hereafter of this happy hour. It is a good thing, no doubt, to decipher hieroglyphics, to read the inscriptions of former ages, to question the idols of forgotten peoples. But is it not still better to enter into the spirit, to feel the genius, life, of the places you are visiting ? As I gaze into the deep,

dark blue sky, — reflect, meditate, — this spirit is hovering over me : I look into the face of this strange and radiant nature, I hear the voice of this wonderful river, — all these marvellous scenes that recall so vividly the old Bible narratives speak to and kindle my imagination.

If I had come here for the sake of science, I should be to blame ; but since it was the sun that drew me to Egypt, am I not right ? The country of the fourth dynasty, or of the eighteenth dynasty, would never have attracted me from my course : the land where Joseph died, where Moses was born, — this is the land that I have come to visit. You can study at will in France, in Paris : you can read ciphers and hieroglyphics in your arm-chair. But if all this does not satisfy you, if you want to see palm-trees, fellahines, the villages of the Nile, the luminous atmosphere of the East, the delightful scenes that we read about in the Bible, — this wonderful land, this sun, this Egypt, in a word, with its present beauty and past glory, — you must come and sail upon the Nile as I am doing. Now that I am here, shall I not enjoy it ?

XVI.

F I R E

EVERY day now the heat is becoming more intense. To-day at noon the thermometer in the sun was 57° . In spite of the crocodiles, we had a delicious bath. A wounded goose was floating down the stream, a beautiful creature with bright yellow back and white wings. The crew jumped into the water, meaning to surround and capture it; but I won the prize while they were making their arrangements.

The morning was serene enough, but before night we came near meeting with a real catastrophe. It was just after dinner. We were quietly sipping our coffee on the terrace, when suddenly there was an alarm of fire; and as the fearful cry, Fire! Fire! rang up from below, the great lateen sail flared white with the reflection, to tell us that the danger was real.

We sprang downstairs: the sailors, who were taking their siesta on the deck, leaped up with

fierce, terrible shouts and yells, and one and all we rushed into the saloon. The air was thick with dense elonds of smoke, we could hear nothing but the shouts of the mariners, could see nothing but the flames that ran along the walls, licking the fresh varnish of the panels.

Luckily, to make a short story of it, the alarm had been given in time ; and we succeeded in putting the fire out, but none too soon. The room in which we keep our stores of powder and loaded weapons was already burning : another moment, and the explosion would have blown us into the air.

As soon as quiet was restored, the question was to find out who or what had caused the accident. Micaeli insinuated that it was to be attributed to a treachery on the part of Nicolo. He did not, however, venture to institute an investigation ; but seated himself in the fore part of the boat, and beating his head, weeping, lamenting, abandoned himself to despair.

At last the truth came out. Poor Henri is the guilty one ; while making the rounds to see that all was safe, as he does every evening, a spiteful spark flew from his pipe and lighted upon a mosquito net. The flames were communicated

from the net to the room ; and, but for the promptness with which they were extinguished, the dahabieh would have vanished in flame and smoke.

As it is, we had a moment's alarm, but have gained a subject of conversation for the evening, so that we have gotten off very well. Even Micaeli has recovered his spirits, and, inspired by the occasion, tells us the story of two crafts, that travelled together for some time, pursuing and pursued, as amorous as two turtle doves. They caught fire, were consumed, and mingled their ashes : the birds within flew off together. It was a pretty romance ; but, having no cause to desire the immolation of our dahabieh, we were quite as well pleased to have had the fire quenched.

XVII.

THE CURSE OF THE SANTON.

DID I ever tell you, my dear friend, of an adventure that we met with soon after starting? One day, by a bend of the river, Abouset pointed out to us a little white cupola peeping out from a pine grove. Here lived and died a Santon, celebrated for his piety: it was his last home. Here dwells his successor, and summons into his presence travellers, reis, crews, fishermen; all, in short, who pass his shrine. Seated upon a matting, he gives audience to the faithful.

Oh! you, who shall hereafter pass this way, do not forget, whoever you may be, to seek the protection of this all-powerful Santon. Dispenser of good and evil fortunes, of chances and disasters, upon him will depend the fate of your voyage. Favorable or adverse as he decrees, even the winds obey his powerful mandate: it is his privilege to impede the progress of crafts, or speed them on

their way; bid them ride triumphant on the favoring billows, or sink engulfed in the raging waves. In him are combined the attributes of Æolus, Neptune, and Jupiter. Unhappy is the wretch who does not stop to greet this oracle, to consult with him, propitiate him with his prayers, and, above all, pay him. The wrathful Santon will pursue him with his vengeance. Winds and waves, fire, air, water, will enter into a conspiracy against him, will hunt him down to death. Nor need he hope to gain a sheltering port: his craft will be doomed never to land at any port.

Must I confess that we did not believe in the power of the Santon, and passed him without notice? Ever since, we have been the victims of our incredulity. He lifted his hand into the air, and hurled down upon us his malediction. At once the winds became adverse; and yesterday, as you know, we had an assault from another of the elements, Fire. What will become of us? Unhappily, we have not seen the last of our troubles. Listen with compassion, my dear friend, to the history of our misfortunes.

We had just passed Koum-Ombass, and, inspired by the fresh breeze, were already anticipating our arrival at Assouan and the cataract.

It was seven o'clock in the morning, and, as on the previous evening, we were quietly sipping our coffee, when suddenly a formidable bellowing resounded under our very feet. A hole had been torn in the bottom of the dahabieh, and the waters of the river were rushing, boiling into the hold.

We gave the alarm; and Captain Abouset, hearing our outcry, ran forward. Seeing at a glance the imminence of the danger, he stepped into the saloon, laid hold of a cushion, plunged it into the gaping water-way, jumped upon it, and made desperate efforts to keep it down. The dahabieh was quickly moored; but, in spite of Abouset's exertions, in spite of his cushion and his great feet, the water continued rushing in with such impetuosity, that we soon lost all hope of saving the luckless barque, and set to work to unload it of whatever was portable. Trunks, chairs, tables, mattresses, linen, provisions, kitchen utensils, were all flung ashore in a confused heap.

In the mean while the craft was constantly sinking. The sailors worked at the pumps, and some fellahs who had come to the spot assisted them. We had gone ashore: there we were in

the midst of all that delightful disorder, and in the full blaze of a pitiless sun, urging on the crew and mounting guard over the relics of the wreck.

Poor Henri had scarcely got his eyes open, and could not find his pantaloons: he went poking about among the things in a vain search for them, and could not comprehend what was the meaning of all this uproar.

Micaeli completely lost his presence of mind: uttering protests, threats, making violent gesticulations, actually roaring, he ran here and there, but did not pretend to give orders, and only increased the general dismay. At last, noticing his chocolate and candles, which were beginning to melt in the sun, he became more composed: as a hen gathers her chickens, he set to work with tender solicitude to collect the scattered pots of his three kinds of sweetmeats.

But now, what with their pumping and hoarse cries, — Hé! Allah! Hé! Allah! — our men succeeded in getting the barque afloat.

When they had pumped her dry enough, they moored her to a sand-bank on the opposite shore, and then came over to our side and began smoking their pipes, thinking, no doubt, that Provi-

dence would do the rest. We did not agree with them, and greatly to their discomfiture set them to work again arranging our goods and converting the great sail into a sort of tent.

This done, Micaeli went on an exploring expedition to the neighboring villages, to make inquiries and get help from the police. It was all in vain. *Mafieb* (there are none),—this was the answer he received everywhere: he would have stood as good a chance out in the open sea. We despatched the sailors in all directions.

At last, about three o'clock, an Effendi arrived with quite a respectable escort of donkeys and secretaries. He ordered some dates presented to us, but Micaeli and Nicolo were equal to the occasion. Refusing the dates with contempt, they broke out in what seemed to be a violent passion, threatening and gesticulating in the most melodramatic style. This is the only way to make Arabs respect you. The Effendi apologized humbly, stating, in excuse for his own short-comings, that he lived in a distant village, and on leaving home had not known of the accident. To show his sincerity, he ordered the Sheik of the nearest village to be bastinadoed: the poor fellow's soles were already beginning to tingle, when we saved him by our intercession.

The victims of this most prosaic shipwreck next proceeded to hold a consultation with the natives in their tent, when the following resolutions were adopted. The Effendi was to provide us with a boat, and, furnished with provisions for two days, we were to proceed to Assouan. During our absence, Nicolo was to remain at our hastily contrived camp, with suitable weapons and an escort. The Effendi agreed, also, to summon men enough from the neighboring villages to draw the craft out of the stream; and despatch a courier to Assouan for workmen and carpenters, so that it might be repaired.

This worthy official kept his word about the boat, which soon came to hand. Ye gods! what a boat, and what mariners! It was a good idea naming it the bark of Charon. By all the ghosts wandering on the gloomy shores of the Styx, I pledge you my word that, if it had crossed back and forth to the infernal regions a hundred times, it could not have been blacker, more filthy, more repulsive, more begrimed with smoke.

The face of the reis, bearded and horribly grinning, recalled to my mind certain lines of Virgil, which I had not thought of for a long time: —

“Portitus has horrendus æquas et flumina servat,
Terribile squalore Charon,” etc.

A more accurate portrait of our captain could not have been painted. With his rough white beard falling over his breast, his squalid garment tied by a knot and hanging from the shoulders, he was Charon *in propria personæ*.

The prospect was not inviting, but unfortunately we had no more freedom of choice than the poor ghosts waiting to cross the Styx. Old Charon hoisted a dilapidated sail, and, resigning ourselves as we best could, we embarked with Micaeli and two sailors.

The wind soon died away. Like a cloak of darkness shrouding earth and sky, night dropped down suddenly upon us; and, before being fairly on our way, we found ourselves stupidly moored on a black and muddy shore.

The Nile!—this is no longer the Nile, but a marsh, and the most foggy, boggy, miry, fetid marsh in existence, to boot. One would really imagine it Virgil's *Stygia palus*. Nor is this one of the brilliant evenings of the Orient whose praises we have been chanting. The night is suited to the place,—a night of Erebus, dark, damp, moonless, starless, the air thick with a darkness that can be felt, huge masses of vapor creeping slowly over the surface of the bog.

Where now are the delicious shores of the Nile, with their woods of palms, quivering and rustling joyously in the wind? No trees grow upon this fatal shore, no healthy life is here; but poisonous exhalations exude from the earth, fabulous bones are scattered over it, coarse reeds and grasses grow thick and dank; huge, blackish plants, overspreading earth and water, scatter abroad fever and pestilence. Then think what swarms of venomous living things, what reptiles, serpents, must be crawling and creeping among this monstrous, unhealthy growth. When the plants wave and undulate, plaintive groans, melancholy cries, sob up from the wave beneath; then again the most inexplicable, unutterable sounds interrupt the sullen silence, — harsh gurglings, croakings, strange flappings of wings. You feel as if you must make your escape or perish, and jumping ashore sink knee-deep in the filthy mire.

The water is brackish, sluggish, infectious: it grows cold, — the dampness chills you through and through. Horrible night! Even to think of it gives me the nightmare.

When pious Virgil states that the entrance to hell is inhabited by sleep and vain dreams, he promulgates a great error. Sleep and repose fled

far from our eyelids on that unhappy night, leaving us haunted by useless regrets that only increased our torments.

And although it is true that we encountered an army swarming over the benches of this fatal craft, it was by no means composed of feeble, helpless shadows : Enæas would have found it a difficult matter to put them to flight with the edge of his sword. More numerous than the flies that hang over our tables at the hour of dinner ; more numerous than the frogs that issued from the river at the command of Moses, and invaded the couch of Pharaoh ; eager for carnage and thirsty for blood, was the innumerable host of microscopic beings that Charon claimed for his subjects. Under cover of the darkness, these tiny, irreconcilable foes of man advanced against us in compact, formidable troops, and besieged us on all sides. Stung, bitten, burning, itching, we could not have suffered more if we had been robbed in the fatal vest of Nessus. Wretched that we are, will the Santon never forego his vengeance.

XVIII.

THE INFERNAL REGIONS.

THE next day the waters lay motionless in a dead calm: not a breath of wind was stirring; not a passing zephyr rippled the sluggish wave; the rag that served us for a sail flapped languidly against the stick that played the part of a mast. Cursed barque of Charon!

We were dragged slowly along by a piece of old patched rope that pulled apart every now and then, for our further entertainment. Then the boat drifted down stream, and had to be hauled to. What a day! How endless seemed the weary hours! What torments of ennui we endured! To put the climax to our misfortunes, our provisions gave out. How the devil we kept ourselves alive and in any sort of spirits, I don't know. Are the waters of the Nile Nephenthe to dull pain? Have they power to dis-

sipate melancholy, like that wonderful beverage which Helen offered Telemachus, in the palace of fair-haired Menelaus?

“Powerful God of hell,” said Joseph to Charon, in the language of despair suggested by the occasion, “if you show yourself propitious, if before the smoking coursers of the sun have reached their goal your gloomy bark conducts us in safety to the roaring cataract, I will sacrifice to you an old goat as black as Abouset, and as thin as Micaeli.”

“For my part, I will sacrifice Micaeli himself,” said Henri, who was altogether furious.

Like a god of basalt with the head of a beast, Charon, indifferent to all our promises, sat motionless at the helm of the boat.

Evening came at last; and can you believe that this odious old ferryman of the Styx wanted to lay to again on some gloomy shore in the realm of Pluto? Persuasions proving ineffectual, we had recourse to threats. This, it seems, is the best way of dealing with these rogues of infernal deities. This time, the old mariner, who had never before seen a revolver, resigned himself to tracking: he went ashore, seized the rope and tugged us into Assouan.

It was about eleven when we landed. A French merchant very obligingly put his craft at our disposition for the night.

God be praised! We are saved. Off with you to Inferno, cursed barque of Charon!

XIX.

PHILÆ.

LONG before dawn we bestrode our little donkeys and galloped off towards the island of Philæ, which is above the cataract. The region about Assouan is very desolate, and bears traces of waste and devastation, that tell the story of the vicissitudes to which, like all frontier towns, it was exposed at an early period of its history. We passed the ruins of Roman Syene, and visited the crumbling fragments of the old town, of which nothing is left but a portion of the surrounding wall. What a singular sport of fate ! The city has fallen, the bulwark remains standing. Although the country is hilly and broken, you can follow with your eye for a long distance this massive granite wall, high and thick, and flanked with broad and deep ditches : so strongly constructed, indeed, that it has survived for ages the city which it was built to defend.

From Syene, you can see both the Mussulman cemetery, which contains several dilapidated mosques towering up among its tombs, and the ancient necropolis, thickly strewn with stately monuments of granite and black, shining basalt. One would suppose that armies of giants had fought upon this plain, and left it covered with their prodigious bones.

Your attention is attracted by two small Mahometan tombs, standing on the brow of a hill, on your right hand, and built of some very white stone. The precipitous cliffs are covered with immense hieroglyphics.

We turned to the left for the purpose of visiting the ancient quarries of red granite, known as Syenite granite. It was from these quarries that the Egyptians obtained the stone for all their monuments: the columns, statues, sphinxes, sarcophagi, with which all Egypt is adorned. Here stands an unfinished obelisk, with three of its sides cut and polished, while the fourth is still attached to the rock: there is a horizontal groove in the rock, and a row of holes regularly pierced. This is very interesting; for it shows us how the old Egyptians proceeded to rend off these immense blocks, many of them forty yards in length.

In all probability, the holes were stopped with thoroughly seasoned wood, and the groove filled with water : the expansion of the wood, on absorbing the water, would be sufficient to separate the monolith.

We passed through several Berber villages, and found the inhabitants quite a different race from the fellahs. They are far more intelligent and energetic : their faces are expressive, and they move with a quickness and decision which is quite unknown to the broken-spirited fellah. Shut off from the rest of the world, dwelling among rocks, and on the verge of a dangerous tempest-tost torrent, it seems as if they had imbibed from the savage rudeness of nature a certain force and energy.

Thin and wiry, they are mere bundles of muscles and nerves ; their complexion is of a tawny yellow, and glitters in the sun like old marble ; their hair and beard are thin and grow in tufts, and their ears are wide and very pointed, which gives them an absurd resemblance to satyrs. The Berbers are in great request in Cairo, where great numbers of them are employed as servants, donkey-drivers, and porters, and in other subordinate positions. Active, industrious, and

remarkable for their fidelity, they are the Savoyards or Auvergnets of Egypt.

I noticed some of the women in a grove of sycamore-trees, some lying down and others sitting cross-legged, weaving baskets of palm-leaves. Most of them were decked out gayly with glass necklaces, ivory bracelets, and other savage ornaments; and they wore also — a fashion that I had not seen before — a ring in the right nostril matched by an ear-ring in the left ear, the latter so large and heavy that its weight had perceptibly increased the length of the ear.

Some naked children who were playing in the sand had caught a little bird, and were amusing themselves by tormenting it: it is the same thing everywhere, — children are always cruel. Then came some young Nubian damsels, dressed in the rather light costume of their tribe, — a little belt of leather thongs, — and with scarabee, rings, &c., for sale. They offered them to us with a smile that was really quite agreeable for Nubians, and which made a great display of their white teeth.

We rode on over the rocks and sand. Nothing can exceed the barren and mournful desolation of this whole region: it is a desert of stone and sand commingled. We were about an hour pass-

ing through a rocky defile lined with a thick bed of dust, which did not look as if it had ever been trodden except by wandering jackals. Pile upon pile of huge, formless cliffs hang threatening around, completely intercepting the view. Even our alert little donkeys found it a hard matter to get along in this dry, movable dust: they struggled to keep their footing, and were advancing but slowly, when a sudden turn brought us out of the defile, and as if by enchantment we saw before us, almost at our very feet, the Nile and the island of Philæ.

Nothing can be more ravishingly beautiful than this island. A lovely vision, it rises suddenly before you, brilliant and airily fantastic as a dream. It is a strange and wonderful mirage, — the strangest of these deserts, — that of a city of the Pharaohs, that seems just to have emerged from the sleep of centuries, or from the waves of the Nile; a city of temples, palaces, sculptured pylones, as perfect and complete as if they had been built yesterday. It is an island clothed with a gorgeous robe of tropical vegetation, adorned with massive and magnificent monuments. The shadows of the polychrome columns and red obelisks mingle with the shadows of the date-

palms, the dom-palms, and the huge sycamores : the stone capitals are wreathed and intertwined with the green capitals of the trees. The island of Philæ is a fairy land of palaces and verdure.

Through the very heart of Egypt, from the Mediterranean coast to Nubia, the Nile has wafted us. I have climbed the pyramids of Gizeh, have caught a glimpse of the wonderful monuments of Thebes, but never have I seen any thing that impressed me so deeply as this enehanting vision, — this oasis of the past, rescued from the wreck of ages, gracious and smiling under its green roof of waving palms. Hitherto, Egypt has always seemed to me powerful, colossal, formidable, but dead, petrified. In Philæ, antiquity still lives ; the past is young, and seems to smile ; Pharaoh reigns, and Isis is enthroned on high. The old worship of Osiris, with its basalt gods and porphyry goddesses, with its sacred scarabee and immutable sphinxes, with all its attendant rites and mysteries, has withdrawn to this island, and here still survives. It seems as if Time had not taken a single step for thousands of years : his cruel scythe, which spares neither persons nor monuments, has respected this beautiful sanctuary of the past.

How easy to imagine, in wandering through these splendid colonnades, that the statues of the old kings with which they are adorned are about to wake from their stony sleep and live; that extinct generations, rising from their silent tombs, are about to stand before you.

We came over to the island in a light skiff, rowed skilfully by some young Nubian lads, who landed us at the quay. On arriving, we went first of all to a granite rock on the extreme southern point of the island: it commands a fine view of all the monuments, and climbing it we drank in the impressive scene.

Afterwards, I visited the temples and examined all their beauties in detail; the colored columns, the capitals of lotus-flowers or palm-leaves meeting in the stem-like base and opening at the summit, the cornices painted with tender greens or intense blues, the bas-reliefs and sculptures so exquisitely wrought.

Then, with a very learned book in my hand, I went through the pylones and porticos, trying to discover the hieroglyphics, ciphers, and inscriptions which my author translated. I did not have to learn from him that the great temple of Isis had been built in the reign of Ptolemæus Philadel-

plus, and completed by Ptolemeus Evergets; or many other curious facts, interesting and possibly true, but unfortunately which I no longer remember. The charm of this book was that it promised to reveal to me the secret lore of hieroglyphics and ciphers, in which there is always a fascination.

In my enthusiasm, I even attacked the famous inscription of Rosette, of which there is a copy at Philæ. But this did not last long: I came to the conclusion that I had better leave science to the *savants*, and depositing my book by the side of the famous inscription I went back to the granite rock.

Forgetting all about hieroglyphics and ciphers, I seated myself in silence upon this giant cliff overlooking the fairy island, and sank into a reverie: musingly I thought of this wonderful southern land, with its transcendent beauty of nature, its wonderful history, with its sun as glorious to-day as in the earliest antiquity. Gazing far away as the eye could reach, far into the dreamy distance, I contemplated the wonderful landscape.

Darkly outlined against the southern horizon arose the Nubian mountains. The Nile was blue

as turquoise and calm as a sleeping lake: never had I seen it more tranquil and serene. The hills between which it glided with a scarcely perceptible motion were shaped like huge pyramids, and, furrowed as they were with brown streaks, looked as if they had donned striped Arab cloaks.

The eastern shore of the winding river is broadly belted for a long distance with a magnificent palm-wood. Then comes a barren plain, with no green thing growing upon it except a few groves of sycamores, under which stand some rude villages with ranges of shadoofs near by. As I was gazing in that direction, a herd of buffaloes rushed over the plain and plunged into the river; while high in the blue air, like a black cloud, a flock of birds, sweeping from the south, hung for a second motionlessly poised between two mountain peaks.

The island of Beggeh, one of the group to which Philæ belongs, and to the west of it, is nothing but a rocky pile. Huge granite boulders, blackened by the sun, rounded and polished by the winds beating against them, so corroded by time and weather that they look like great pieces of rusty old armor, are heaped up together to enor-

mous heights, or lie scattered along the shore like fallen avalanches. A few palm trees grow among the rocks by the columns of a ruined temple.

Buried in the depths of this silent, lonely retreat, this sacred adytum of Nature, calm in the midst of the stern-browed, serried cliffs by which she is so stormily besieged, the island of Philæ seems forgotten and abandoned by the whole world; and is so except by the sun and the Nile. The Nile laves his favorite with soft caresses, and murmurs tenderly as he lingers by her shores. The sun casts down such a blaze of glory upon her palaces and temples that they glitter again: the old gray granite is transfigured and seems a dazzling white.

Absorbed in a solemn, religious reverie, like some faithful widow living in her memories of the past, here for ever she abides, cherishing the worship of former ages. With nothing save the respect that is felt for her sanctity, the awe she inspires to protect from the profaning grasp of rude hands, from the invasion of conquerors, she is safe in her quiet seclusion; and in this calmness, this silence enlivened only by the timid warbling of birds, finds all her happiness.

She is for ever dreaming of the days of her glory: she remembers how the Romans came to Philæ, and planted their victorious eagles upon her shores; she remembers the French, also, of the year VII., those second Romans, who paused in their desperate pursuit of the Mamelukes to inscribe upon one of her porticos a record of the glorious expedition.

Thus, while gazing upon this enchanting scene, my thoughts wandered. From my granite rock I could see the colonnade and pylones which lead to the great temple, and could even distinguish the colossal figure of a king painted upon its outer wall. A swarm of Liliputian enemies were at his feet: he held them by the hair of the head, while lifting threateningly his massive club.

Nor were these the only monuments that I beheld. Triumphal arches, temple courts, columns, obelisks, lay at my feet; and sphinxes half buried in the ruins of a mud village.

Best of all, arose before me in full view the exquisite little temple of Nectanebus, that gem of art, that master-piece of grace and elegance. Long, long did I gaze upon it. In this lovely monument, the massive, ponderous grandeur which always distinguishes Egyptian architecture

is combined with the most ethereal lightness, the most airy delicacy. Fretted with open-work, it seems to swim and quiver in the golden flood of sunshine with which it is inundated. How gay and brilliant it looks outlined so clearly, so purely, upon the pure Libyan sky !

Then, while still drinking in the beauty of the landscape, beholding, enjoying every thing, I thought of the great names which this river, descending from regions so remote, is for ever murmuring ; I thought of the barbarous land through which it passes before reaching the island of Philæ,—the countries which we should have to travel even now ten, twenty, fifty, a hundred days to reach. Far, far away in the ever-receding south, I said to myself, on distant shores which these same waters have reflected, these countries lie,—some of the nearest of them we are familiar with, of others we can only form vague surmises ; and then comes a great world of which almost absolutely nothing is known. Nubia, Abou-Simbel, with its grand colossi, Wad-dee-Helfeh, the cataracts, are familiar ground. Then come Dongolah and Khartoum, the great marts supplying the world with ostrich feathers, ivory, gum-arabic, and incense. Still further to

the south lie Sennaar, Kardofan, Darfour, Abyssinia, countries peopled by savage tribes, through whose forests rove panthers, giraffes, ostriches, — countries of which little has been known hitherto, but into which the avarice and cruelty of civilized man have forced a way. It is in this region that the traders in human flesh capture the cargoes of slaves, — melancholy spectacle, — which we so often meet upon the Nile. Advancing still farther south, what do we find? The Nile, reflecting as ever the sky above it, valleys, cities, lakes, mountains, deserts, — who knows what? — tropical forests, savage races, troops of elephants, the hippopotamus, the two-horned rhinoceros, the rank vegetation, the fierce and dangerous animals, the monsters of the equator. And still beyond, — penetrating still deeper into the heart of the south, — what? The sources of the Nile, — the ever-living, inexhaustible fountain whence flows the life-giving river; those mighty lakes, no less a mystery, no less an enigma in their solemn beauty, since human eyes have beheld them, than while their very existence was an unsolved problem. The life of this mystery, the clew to this enigma, is flowing before me: it gleams under my eyes; it washes these shores, these monuments,

written over with hieroglyphics, ponderous volumes of a secret lore ; it reflects these granite gods with their stony eyes, immovable, and no less mysterious than is the river. This is indeed the country of the Sphinx.

The heat was becoming unendurable ; the sun rode directly over our heads ; the shadows seemed to shrink away from his burning gaze. Only a hint of shade, a slender bluish line remained visible at the foot of the temple of Isis. The sky was vividly, intensely blue, — blue as the enamelled statuettes of Osiris ; and there was something appalling in its immovable serenity. Yes : an eternal sameness, even of beauty, would be terrible.

The sun was a sun of fire, his heat as of molten lead : all nature seemed to suffer and faint beneath the fierceness of his rays. The birds flew for refuge into the deserted temples ; the date-palms drooped their proud heads, their languishing fronds depending as mournfully as the branches of the weeping willow. At this hour the beauty of Philæ is more than solemn, more than austere : it assumes a strangely sad, an indescribably mournful, desolate aspect. Over every thing is cast a feverish, unnatural glow, a tawny-yellow

tint : there are no shadows, there is no blending of hues ; the villages seem uninhabited ; and, far away in the distance, the mountains, glorious as flaming messengers of Horus at sunrise, take on at noon a dead, lifeless, indescribable hue, like the dull, yellowish gleam of an expiring conflagration.

One last long look at Philæ, and I turned regretfully away. This was as far south as we were going : the limit of our voyage was reached. We were about five hundred miles from Cairo, and almost under the tropics : for two months almost every day had been increasing the distance between us and France. I felt as sad in leaving Philæ as in parting from a friend. But, at least, a picture of the scene, so tender and graceful in many of its aspects, and so grand and terrible in others, with its sublime monuments and luxuriant verdure set in the very heart of the arid desert, — a violent contrast seen everywhere in Egypt (the one unalterable feature of its scenery), and yet which always causes a new surprise, — will never fade from my memory.

Certain places, like certain people, have the power of winning us at the very first glance. Issuing from the desert, and arriving suddenly at

this secluded little corner of the earth, this oasis of nature, this island of the past, the traveller feels a strange sense of repose, a deep inward satisfaction. Something within him seems to say, It is well with you here: stop, and make the most of your happiness. This intangible, dreamy, promised, prophetic bliss fades from you as you depart: it becomes one of the lost possibilities. You sigh, as when thinking of a dead friendship. And then you know there is always something bitter in eternal separations.

On our way back to Syene, as we were passing through one of the Berber villages, near the cataract, some Nubian lads joined us, and persisted, whether we would or not, in following us to the river.

The cataract of Syene has no longer the formidable reputation that it enjoyed of old. Seneca and Cicero firmly believed that the roaring of the fall was so tremendous that you could not come near it, without being actually deafened.

Was it not Paul Lucas who related to Louis XIV. all those wonderful stories about the cataract and the Berbers? — that the river precipitated itself over cliffs more than two hundred feet high, and yet that these savages crossed it with

case, on their rafts? — that it formed an arch in falling, under which you could walk without getting wet, just as you do under the cascade of the wood of Boulogne? &c. Besides all these fine stories, he had a picture of the fall, plunging over cliffs two hundred feet high; and with the Berbers, no doubt, shooting it in their magical rafts.

It is difficult to believe that such grossly fabulous narratives should have found credence at the polished court of the magnificent king.

The truth is that there is no cataract; that is to say, there is no actual fall of water, but only a series of foaming, tumultuous rapids. For about two leagues the bed of the river intersecting a rapid slope, and bristling with huge, black precipices, granite boulders, limestone or porphyry peaks, is terribly obstructed. The Nile, with all these obstacles to struggle against, pauses shuddering, then plunges forward at mad speed, is driven back with a huge recoil, leaps over some of the opposing rocks, whirls about others, and is fearfully swollen and convulsed. The series of rapids thus formed are full of dangerous eddies and whirlpools, and are called the cataract. For the rest, the scene is very grand: this narrow

channel, framed with serried ranks of huge, jagged cliffs, and with the tormented stream foaming at their base, is more than picturesque. It is like some scene of primeval chaos,—the fearful, almost impassable entrance to the world of beauty into which it leads.

The Nubian lads who had accompanied us jumped into the swiftest of the rapids, and sported about in the white foam, like trouts in a stream. Leaping, shouting, and performing all sorts of antics, they could not have been more at home. When carried away by the violence of the current, they would take advantage of an eddy, and cling to some rocky island. For their pains we gave them a Bucksheesh.

The sand was mixed with mica, and glared terribly. It was impossible to hold it in your hand for a single moment, and it fairly roasted our feet through our white boots.

The air over it vibrated as over a furnace. Reflected from this fiery bed, the heat was so excessive as to be almost suffocating: we could scarcely breathe.

The Berbers are said to cook their eggs and bread in the sand; and I have no doubt that the statement is correct, for it was certainly more than sixty degrees.

No one, except those who have breathed the fiery breath of the desert, can form a conception of what thirst is, — the thirst you experience in these countries. The more you drink, the more you want to drink: the palate is as dry as a furnace when you have scarcely drained the last drop. To your thirsting soul a glass of cold water means supreme happiness: you are constantly longing to quaff that divine nectar. Pursued, taken possession of by this one image, you can think of nothing else, and are in danger of becoming a monomaniac. You are dry, even while drinking, and feel that you would be capable on occasion of committing almost any folly for the sake of quenching your thirst.

In the bazaars of Assouan, it was a little cooler. Nowhere in Egypt are to be seen more striking specimens of different races, or more singular and barbarous costumes than among the jostling crowds that frequent these bazaars. Here you find your old friend the fellahs, at home as everywhere in Egypt, and now quite black; great numbers of the active and busy Berbers are to be seen, and the negroes of the Upper Nile, with their thick lips, retreating foreheads, and prominent cheek-bones; here resort the bronze-hued

Ethiopeans, with their ivory bracelets and huge, dangling ear-rings ; and, finally, here you see the Albanian with his white fustanelle, and the Mogrebin of the desert, with his striped cloak.

At each step you feel that you have entered a new country : every thing has a different and more barbarous aspect. This is no longer Egypt, no longer the Orient, but the wild, unreclaimed south,—the south, with its savage tribes, its tropical products, its strange and magnificent scenery, and fiery sun ; in a word, you are in Africa.

Issuing from one of the bazaars, as we were walking along the street, what should we see but three heads of hair so thick and woolly that they would have aroused the envy even of king Pharamond himself. Promenading under this singular foliage, appeared three gigantic savages, tattooed with endless stripes and bars, and naked to their waists. In their belts were thrust old embossed pistols ; and they carried enormous sabres that rattled at their heels, and took up the whole street.

“ In the name of heaven, what have we here ? ” cried Henri.

Micaeli informed us that they belonged to the

tribe of the Ababdehs, a savage race of whose origin nothing was known, and who spoke a language unlike that of any of the other tribes. Their country includes the region extending from Nubia to the Red Sea.

Some women passed by with their children; and I noticed now again, as frequently on other occasions, that they looked infinitely more civilized and humane than the men. They had one bad habit, however, that of fairly saturating their heads and hair with castor oil. I was informed that this was done for the sake of cleanliness; but, if this is their object, glue would suit them much better.

Assonan, formerly Syene, is on the extreme frontier of Egypt. Conquered successively by the Greeks and Romans, and selected as the see of a bishopric by the Christians, it has had an eventful history. Here Juvenal was exiled eighteen hundred years ago, the poor satirist being doomed to expiate his virtue in this very town, which, together with Esne, was to become, at a later period, the Siberia of the Ghazecyah.

I was wrong, though, to compare it to Siberia; for Assouan is the hottest place on the globe.

On the 21st of June, the summer solstice, the

sun's rays fall so perpendicularly as to strike down to the very bottom of a deep well, which is exhibited in consequence as one of the curiosities of the place. From top to bottom the walls are brilliantly lighted.

The ancients drew from this fact the conclusion that it was situated directly under the tropic of cancer. We know now that this is an error. Assouan is at a short distance from the cancer; but it has always maintained its reputation of being hotter than other places, an opinion based upon certain climatic phenomena, and also no doubt, — as I have good reason for knowing, — upon experience.

Elephantine, abandoned now to the occupation of the Nubians, who have found this lovely spot an agreeable site for their mud villages, gleams gem-like upon the bosom of the Nile, directly opposite Assouan. There are quite a number of ruins scattered over its fields; but it is chiefly remarkable for its wonderful green sweeps of verdure, gay with flowers, and shaded by the most magnificent trees. Nothing can surpass the fertility of its soil and the superb luxuriance of its vegetation. The Arabs call it the Island of Flowers: travellers have named it the Garden of the Tropics.

XX.

DREAMING UNDER THE STARS.

WE were eager now to return to Kum-Ambos, and by sunset our craft was in readiness; no longer the gloomy barque of Charon, but a beautiful little row-boat, long, light, and gay as a flamingo. Mats were placed for us, and we seated ourselves. The people of Assouan, numerous grotesque specimens of savage humanity, crowded around us with curiosities for sale; and before starting we purchased some indigenous articles, the belts of the Nubians, the daggers of the Ababdehs, &c. At last the crew dipped their oars with a long measured sweep, the skiff darted down the river, and we bade farewell to the granite peaks of Syene. Never shall I forget their last look, blushing purple with the kiss of the setting sun.

No! Nor shall I ever forget—not if I should live for ages, live to be as venerably monumental as the colossi of Memnon,—the night that I passed

in that boat, reclining on my mat and gazing at the beautiful stars. A tropical night cannot be described: the spectacle it presents is too sublime, too ineffable. No matter how much feeling, how much imagination you may be endowed with, all the strength of your nature will be absorbed in feeling, in enjoying, in sensating, as it were, the magnificence of the Creator's work.

Dipping my hand into the rippling wave, playing with the cool waters, I repeated M. Ampère's beautiful verses: —

“The stars that shine so brightly overhead,
The rustling sails kissed by the dallying wind,
The river murmuring o'er its rocky bed,
These things I sing, within my barque reclined.”

For my part, I was not fortunate enough to have the command of rhythmic numbers, but my thoughts, my dreams, my emotions, swayed to an unuttered rhythm: I breathed in the atmosphere of poetry that surrounded me, that shed over me a mystical spell, — my very soul was steeped in poetry.

Divine was the atmosphere in its unutterable softness and transparency. Tender zephyrs, warm and caressing as the kiss of love, were wafted from

the flower-girt shore, laden with sweet odors. From the waves, from the sky, from the earth, some holy influence seemed to proceed; a mysterious, life-giving emanation, which filled my whole being with repose, and a sense of holy calm.

The Spirit of the Night was floating in the air, but her veil was not a veil of darkness: through its glittering folds gleamed a faint exquisite twilight, like that seen when night and dawn mingle, — a dark translucence in which the face of nature was only partially hidden, and which shed over all things the shadow of a divine mystery.

Bespangling the heavens, like diamond-dust profusely scattered over the mighty vault, the stars of the tropics shone with that serene and radiant light which must illumine the countenances of souls in bliss. From the horizon to the zenith was all one blaze of glory, a glittering tangle of sparks of fire: it was absolutely dazzling. So overpowering was this splendor, this brilliancy of the stars, — keen as the lightning flashes that we see in our climate leaping from stormy clouds in the darkness of the night, — that the sky looked quite black: this blackness,

however, was not dead, negative, — no, it was lustrous, shining, like the skin of an Arab steed.

Still heaving tumultuously with the memory of their swift flight over the rapids, vaguely babbling to their shores of that dark battle with the rocks, the waters of the Nile quivered and trembled as they reflected the splendors of the night. The crew were asleep on their oars. Now and again, trying to arouse themselves, they would strike up some dreamy chorus, and dip their oars drowsily ; but soon, overcome by sleep, their hold relaxed, their song trembled into silence, and the echoes of their voices, dying, dying away, were lost in the rippling of the waves.

Sometimes the current would waft us capriciously nearer to the shore, and then we would see the shadowy woods, vague and cloudlike ; we would see the outlines of the fretted palm-trees, seeming to run wildly along the shore, or whirl about in a fantastic dance ; as the night breeze swept sighing by, we would feel their branches quiver and stir voluptuously ; we would catch the faint rustling of the leaves, tender, fleeting, as a smile or a sigh.

This fertile, rich, luxuriant, superb nature which

we find everywhere on the shores of the Nile, — how radiant did she seem on this lovely night! — radiant as a mother when she first feels the fruit of love quickening in her bosom. With the sap of eternal youth flowing in her veins; clad with brilliant verdure, palpitating, throbbing with life, her song, in which all animate and inanimate things, — the sky, the earth, the waters, every tree, every flower, took part, chanting all of the fulness and rapture of existence, — floated up to heaven.

Such moments mark epochs in our lives: they make an impression upon the mind which never fades. For we can live more in a single moment, feel more truly the glow, the warmth, the color, the reality of life, than in whole years devoted to the practical pursuits of a routine existence. Poetry penetrates into the soul with every breath we draw. The heart beats quicker, the thoughts are keener, more ethereal, the sentiments purer and nobler. Light as thistle-down caught by the breezes of the spring, we are wafted through space on the wings of delicious reveries. Exalted, carried away with a delirious ecstacy, longing, aspiring, at the same time calm and agitated; the soul, forgetting for a brief moment the deceptions and

sorrows of this troubled life, reflects some few scattered rays of the infinite glory, as a silent and deep fountain buried in a thick wood reflects in its smooth waters a ray of sunshine.

When you have once felt what in moments of holy communion these Theban nights whisper to the heart, you will comprehend henceforth the infinite love which the Fathers of the Desert felt for solitude,—that solitude which they called their bride. Far from the tumult of cities, far from the petty ambitions, the pride, envy, and jealousy by which the hearts of men are torn; alone under the mighty vault of heaven, lighted by the sun or glittering with myriads of stars, absorbed in reverie and prayer, their life was a life of contemplation, of aspiration, of ecstasy. Select souls, they forsook the world to hold communion with God,—the invisible God who is at the same time for ever hidden and for ever manifested in his wonderful creation. Peace is a fruit born of the desert.

In the midst of this calmness, this utter repose, with which all nature is pervaded, is inundated, the senses also become calm, and at the same time more intense and powerful: a more interior and exalted life is revealed to them. Piercing the

veil of the night, we behold her face to face ; harkening, we hear her mystical voice. This silence, which seems so deep, so impenetrable, is only apparent : we hear the modulations, so infinitely faint and varied, with which as an unknown universe it is filled. With every instant our perceptions become finer, clearer, subtler ; and we catch at last (a joy, a satisfaction, known to how few) the lowest whisper, the most tremulous vibration, the inmost heart-throb of nature.

Nothing disturbs the silence, — this silence of harmony so deep, so unutterable, — save occasionally the distant howling of a famished jackal, — save the sad sighing of the sakias, and the plaintive song of the poor slaves, who, knowing no rest, even in the watches of the night, are laboring at the shadoofs.

I cannot tell you how inexpressibly melancholy is the singing of these slaves, especially when heard on such a night : singularly monotonous and mournful at all times, it seems more intensely sad because of the beauty of the scene. While all nature is singing a hymn of joy and peace and rapture, while everywhere around you is movement, grace, life, — at this very moment, while your heart is attuned to the universal ecstasy, this

plaintive wail comes sweeping by : it is the crape veil thrown over the bridal robe, the drop of blood falling upon lilies.

Ah me ! this plaintive singing of the poor slave,—the man abandoned by other men, degraded, humiliated, sold like a chattel, hopeless ; who expects no longer either compassion or repose, and who,—perhaps unconsciously,—pours forth all his sorrows, all his regrets, in this long-drawn, monotonous lament, confiding them to this kind nature his only friend, —to these waters, which, as they pass, bear him messages from his own land,—there is something in it actually heart-rending : it sets vibrating the deep chords of sorrow and pain. Perhaps this very song—for they have but one—was at one time gay and cheerful,—may it not be so ?—some hymn which they sang when a free people, at their barbarous festivals. Now, slow, monotonous, fitful, tremulous, a melancholy, weird wail, its burden is the utter exhaustion of the body and the eternal despair of the soul : in lamenting his lost happiness, the poor fellah complains of the bitterness of slavery.

Sometimes, in the chasm of a mountain, or the recess of a hollow valley, you see a light far away

suddenly blazing up through the dark. How strange it seems ! How I love to watch them, — these flickering, inexplicable meteors of the night !

Ever since my grandmother told me the story of Tom Thumb, — a child seated upon her knee, — they have always seemed to me beacons, signal lights, the lantern either of the good fairy or the ogre, lighted either to save the poor traveller lost in the wood, or lure him on to destruction.

Is that a Will-o'-the-wisp I see over yonder ? or a lamp ? Surely, a lamp. If so, who lighted it ? What does it illumine ? A scene of love or some mournful tragedy ? A birth or a death agony ? — the new-born soul awakening into this world ? the departing soul winging its flight to other spheres ? Perhaps some shepherd guarding his flock lighted it, or it may be a signal kindled by some Romeo for his Juliet. I do not know, shall never know ; but one thing is certain, that there is some one over yonder, awake and watching ; hopeful, joyful, expectant, or perhaps weeping and groaning ; or, again, idly dreaming like myself — who knows ? — under the beautiful stars. Since the lamp is beaming, some hand lighted it, — no matter for what : some one is praying or

weeping or smiling; some heart is agitated by fear or grief or joy, beneath its ray. That is enough for me: the lamp arouses my interest and moves me.

Thus, my dear friend, reclining beneath the open sky, softly rocked by the most mysterious of rivers, hearkening to the confused murmurs of the night, inhaling its sweet breath, contemplating this earthly paradise dimly seen through a veil of mysterious gloom, abandoning my soul to delicious reveries, — thus, thus it was that I passed the night. What need had I for slumber?

“Did you sleep well?” Joseph asked me in the morning.

“And, what is more, I had the most absurd dreams,” I replied.

XXI.

KUM-AMBOS.

THE first blush of the dawn revealed to us the sad scene of our shipwreck. There was the tent we had so suddenly improvised, standing ghost-like upon the beach, with our furniture and goods ranged beside it; and the Arab guard, who had been appointed our protectors, squatting near by in a circle. With the help of an opera glass, we could see the whole encampment distinctly. The unfortunate dahabieh, meanwhile, was still moored on the opposite shore; and, knowing as we did the incurable indolence of the Arabs, we felt afraid for a moment that it had not been repaired. Still the mast had been taken down, and it looked all ready to start, which was a good sign.

We landed near the encampment, and sent off Micaeli at full speed to see to having the craft launched.

The people of the villages near by came thronging down to the beach; and with real kindness

and good-feeling offered us dates, coecoa-nuts, &c. The Effendi, too, who made his appearance soon after sunrise, seemed really anxious to be of service. Laying his hand upon his heart, he exhausted all the rhetoric of the Arab tongue in his expressions of sympathy and condolence; and was thoughtful enough to order mats to be spread in a palm-grove, so that we might have some rest after our sleepless nights. This worthy Effendi was quite ready to inconvenience himself for our benefit; but he would not have belonged to his government, if he had not shown himself entirely unscrupulous in robbing and maltreating the unfortunate fellah. Wishing to repose in the shade, his Excellency ordered a poor old woman to give him her forlorn little piece of matting; and, as she hesitated for an instant to resign it, he struck her a cruel blow.

In the villages of Upper Egypt, the dom-palm is no less common than the date; while the date, no longer so excessively slim and frail as in the Delta, does not look quite so much as of old like a broomstick with a feather top. In the luxuriant soil of this more southern region, vigorous saplings grow up about its root, producing a curious effect: the delicate fronds of these min-

ature palms, twisted and interwoven, form an emerald crown about the trunk of the parent tree, which waves gracefully high in the air, or bends its branches over them in sign of protection and love. It is quite a delightful family circle of trees.

The dom-palm cannot boast of the slender, uniform trunk, so column-like and majestic, which is so much admired in the date. On the contrary, the rough, rugged trunk, forking at about half its height, grows in two branches, knotty and twisted as the trunk itself. Dividing in their turn, these branches shoot out various short, stumpy boughs, upon the ends of which grow huge bunches of long, stiff, fan-shaped leaves. The fruit is like a small cocoa-nut; and the natives, by making a skilful incision near the root, obtain a liquid which they prize very highly.

The dom has neither the languishing, drooping grace, nor the aristocratic elegance of the palm: the foliage, as well as the bark of the trunk, is darker; and it is in every way hardier and more rugged. It is a tree of the desert armed to the very teeth, like the cactus among plants; or, if one may be permitted to compare a tree to an animal, like the porcupine among animals. It is not

safe to venture too near it, unless you want to be well pricked.

I had plenty of time to examine them at my leisure, and should have done better, perhaps, to follow the advice of the Effendi, and indulge in a long nap.

No one, indeed, except the unfortunate victim who has travelled among the Arabs, can form a conception of what is meant by slowness and dilatoriness : they cannot imagine what human beings are capable of in this direction. In this languishing Orient, deliberation and dignity are synonymous terms ; and dignity is the special weakness of this solemn, bedraped, and beturbaned people, who are nothing, if not theatrical. This is the quality they emulate more than any other. The question is which shall display the most of it, and accordingly which shall be the laziest and slowest : it really seems as if they were under oath each to outdo the other.

The force of inertia is irresistible : it is useless to struggle against it ; and, finding yourself constantly worsted by this subtle, irresistible foe, you become, in spite of your better judgment, a little of a fatalist. It was written in the book of destiny that our men, by dint of the most superhu-

man exertions, violent gesticulations, fearful and incessant shouts and cries, should finally succeed in accomplishing a very little in a very great deal of time. Before the craft had been brought over to the opposite shore, loaded with its cargo, and the furniture arranged ; before the process verbal of the accident had been drawn up, corrected, signed with all requisite flourishes, and sealed, —before all this had been accomplished, the day had well-nigh slipped away. The sun had long since crossed the Nile, and was nearing the western horizon, when finally the signal for departure was given.

In preparation for descending the Nile, the *dahabieh* had been dismantled, and was so changed that we could scarcely recognize it. The main-mast and great lateen sail had been stowed away in the hold, and replaced by the small foresail. The deck had been removed, and four great oars eighteen feet in length were fastened on each side of the boat. When all was in readiness, we sprang aboard, and the sailors took their places each at his post. And now there is one grand hurrah, the anchor is drawn in, the crew strike up a merry song of homeward bound, and dipping their oars with a regular, measured sweep, we dart off from the shore.

How pleasant it was to get back to our craft again, to our saloon and terrace, after three such days and nights as we had passed, full of delightful experiences indeed, but of unexampled fatigue, — three days of hunger and thirst endured under a tropical sun in a country where shade is unknown, three nights passed in the open air with the stars and the mosquitoes ! Thoroughly repaired, cleansed, and refitted, the dahabieh looks gay, elegant, and as shining as a new hat : we are delighted with it. The crew nod approvingly with self-satisfied smiles, as if every thing had been due to their individual exertions ; and the shore is lined with friendly natives, who follow us with their good wishes.

Here is the great hill of Kûm-Ambos : we are already at its foot, and send up a last greeting to the grand old ruins that crown it, — sad and solitary witnesses of our wreck. The wind is fair : the Nile, murmuring in harmony with the singing of the crew, bears us swiftly on ; and it really seems as if we are going to have a pleasant and speedy voyage, and no more delays. Heaven knows, it is time ! We have had trials enough. Wrecked on a gloomy shore, threatened with conflagration, and haunted by gloomy predictions

of pillage and assassination,—nothing has been wanting hitherto to thwart and render us uncomfortable. Now we will hope for better luck ! The auspices all look favorable. We are starting with our minds filled with glorious recollections of Nubia, and our hearts bounding forward towards Europe.

XXII.

EDFOU.

IN the course of the night we reached Edfou, and on awaking found ourselves moored at its quay. The village is about a quarter of an hour's walk from the river; but the mighty pylons of its temple, sky-soaring as the spires of a vast cathedral, overlook the whole country, and can be seen far and wide.

We started at once to visit it, our path winding through green fields glittering with dew. The eastern sky glowed with the most exquisite hues, and the doves cooed tenderly in the shadowy palm-groves. The flowers and each blade of grass lifted their tiny heads, and as the morning breeze touched them shook off pearly tears.

Not far from the village was a fountain, where some women and young girls had already gathered: they were dressed in the fellahine costume, and looked decidedly picturesque hanging over the water or lolling about in the grass. In this

country of sunshine, where the very sight of water is a refreshment, fountains are a favorite place of resort. Hither flock the women of the country, to obtain water for their households, — a peaceful and useful occupation which, in former ages, was not disdained even by the daughters of kings. How lightly these women carried their pretty water-jugs, turning them over when empty, and holding them by the edge ! How gracefully their garments, open at the breast, and of all colors, white, blue, and brown, floated upon the wind !

The matrons, — mothers of families, — followed by their usual escort of little dust-begrimed urchins hanging on to their one garment, did not stop long : they filled their jugs, helped each other to place them upon their heads, and marched off, holding them with both hands, like so many Caryatides. The young girls preferred lingering by the fountain, laughing and chatting in the cool morning air.

In this I could sympathize with them, for many a pleasant hour have I myself passed, lingering at these Oriental fountains ; watching the people of the country coming and going in one continual stream, and inhaling the fresh, delicious fragrance of coolness, — like that of a summer

shower,—which, when the water is stirred, rises and fills the air.

Seated at this cool spring, it seemed to me that I had never before so truly entered into the beauty and simplicity of the patriarchal life. Here it was, at these very fountains, that the young people of old fell in love with each other and plighted their troth: it is not strange that the fables and legends of all countries should have peopled them with naiads and beneficent genii. As I watched these young girls moving with that peculiar, indescribable grace which belongs to Oriental women, I said to myself that thus Rebecca must have looked when she dawned for the first time upon the dazzled eyes of Jacob.

You do not grow accustomed to the intensely Biblical character of these Oriental scenes: it constantly strikes you with amazement, as strange and novel. The brow of the living present is still stamped with the seal of the past, the perfume of the old days is still hovering in the air. Strange contradictions, strange antitheses, confront you everywhere, in the moral as in the physical world. In this country where individuals grow old with such astonishing rapidity, institutions, things, appear to be immortal. The old

customs, costumes, and traditions remain unchanged, — crystallized, as it were, in a permanent form. Obstinately, persistently permanent, they resist equally time and the spirit of progress: they can neither be modified nor destroyed. It really seems as if old father Time — the winged god that speeds on at such a fearful rate in Europe — had halted, once for all, under these gracious palms; and, like a tired harvester, had laid aside his scythe.

One of my favorite occupations has been watching the people among whom we were passing; and when I have seen Egyptian women standing or sitting by the shores of the Nile, with beds of reeds, perhaps, waving in the wind at their feet, how often have I thought of the daughter of Pharaoh saving Moses, — how often have I imagined that I saw her before me!

The brown tents of the Arabs too, pitched here and there in the sand, how forcibly they recall the old days; and the men themselves, wrapped in their heavy cloaks, falling about them in majestic folds, with their enormous turbans framing their broad foreheads, with their strongly marked, dark faces, black, piercing eyes, free and haughty stride, — who can see them without thinking of

the stately forms of the old patriarchs, or shepherd kings.

Do I dwell too constantly upon the past? weary you with these ceaseless reminiscences of the Bible? Do you perhaps wonder at and blame my infatuation? Well, it is not altogether infatuation. I know perfectly well that the Arab has nothing in common with Abraham or Jacob, that the Bedouin is not Eleazer, and that I ought not to bring into comparison the fellahine and Rebecca. But it is perfectly true, notwithstanding, that you cannot take a step in Egypt without being reminded of Bible history: the aspect and scenery of the country, the appearance of the people, their primitive manners and occupations, are constantly suggesting it. The Orient is the native land of the Bible, and is still all steeped with the local coloring with which the sacred writings are thoroughly pervaded. To understand the poetry of the Bible, with its grand flights full of daring and exalted images, you must contemplate the source of its inspiration, — this strange magnificent scenery, this tropical climate, this wonderful southern world over which, in turn, it has cast a reflected glory.

Again, no one will deny that the Arabs have

retained a closer resemblance to ancient peoples than any other race in existence. They are exactly now what they were described to have been in Genesis. Surrounded by their flocks, living in tents, inhabiting the same country which they then occupied, with the same sky bending over them, the same horizon shutting them in, — they are still in all respects leading the life of the old patriarchs.

Those caravans of donkeys and camels, laden down with furniture, trunks, vessels of brass and iron, weapons and utensils of all descriptions, the whole surmounted by a tent covered with skins. — caravans that are constantly going to and fro in Egypt just as of old, — do they not exhibit daily the spectacle of the emigration of one of the tribes of Israel? This is the style in which the Arab of the present day travels; and so it was that Jacob travelled, when, in Scriptural language, “he left the wells of Serment and departed with his whole family into Egypt, with his children and his children’s children, his daughters and all his posterity, when he departed with all that he possessed into the land of Canaan.”

The sun described in the Bible, is it not the

sun of Egypt? Was it not this blazing Horus of which the prophet wrote: "He burns the earth at noon-day, and who can sustain the fierceness of his flame? He burns like a furnace. He devours the mountains three times: he shoots forth rays of fire, and his brightness dazzles all eyes."

No one will dispute with me, I think, that the Orient is still all warm with the local coloring of the Bible. It is an undeniable fact which at once impresses all travellers; but what effect this fact, acknowledged, self-evident as it is, should have upon art, is not so well established. In the East the artist can see exactly how the people in the Bible looked, dressed, appeared, when they were actually alive. Should his art be governed by his knowledge of these facts? In treating Bible subjects, should he be contented to give us portraits of Eastern people, reprints of Oriental scenery? This seems to me a heresy to the truth of art, a most false theory, although it has its fanatical supporters. Genius creates: it does not imitate. And Art, the child of Genius, cannot be fettered by the limitations of a cold realism. To copy the actual was never intended to be the purpose of art: its glory is to embody the ideal. Expression, — this is the great aim of the artist;

and all means that enable him to attain his end, he has a right to employ.

Fromentin has written very suggestively upon this subject.

“Costume your Bible characters,” he says, “and you destroy their ideality, just as you make a man of your demi-god by clothing him in a modern dress. Place them among well-known scenes, and you are false to the spirit of your subject: you are rendering historical a book which art should regard as pre-historic. The all-important thing for the artist to think of is embodying his idea. This the great masters have always comprehended, and accordingly they have felt the necessity of rendering the form subordinate, simple; of divesting it of extraneous ornaments, and keeping it free from the limitations of local coloring. Art cannot be true unless it is universal. Sacred pictures that do not obey this rule, that are not treated in this broad, grand style, are worthless. Artists should either renounce seeking their subjects in the Bible, or be able to handle them as did Raphael and Poussin.”

After passing the fountain, we came to a canal, fringed with vigorous, thorny-leaved gum-trees. Here, as everywhere, children were play-

ing in the dust ; and we saw also some ferocious-looking yellow dogs sleeping in the sun, and some Nubian girls who stopped to stare at the strangers.

Beyond the canal the soil seemed to be all made up of the crumbling fragments and dust of ruins. Upon a huge hill of this débris stood the village, looking with its surrounding ditch and ragged escarpments quite like a fortified town. We rode through the streets, which were steep and irregular, and coming at last to the temple stood before it in amazed awe.

The temple of Edfou is assuredly one of the grandest and most magnificent in Egypt. Until a short time ago it was so grown over with the mud hovels with which the modern Egyptians deface the grand monuments of their ancestors, that its effect was almost destroyed : the whole interior of the temple was filled with these wretched little huts ; they surrounded the cornices and covered the roof. Thanks to M. Nagnère, all this rubbish has been swept away, and it stands now revealed in all its majesty.

The effect of the pylon is exceedingly imposing. Passing through this grand gateway, you enter a court surrounded by a magnificent range

of thirty-two columns, forming a sort of portico; and find in the vestibule beyond still other columns distributed in a similar manner. The temple itself stands in majestic isolation, surrounded by a grand-columned gallery, communicating on both sides with the portico of the court. Like all Egyptian monuments, it is profusely decorated with hieroglyphics and sculptures in relief: these are in a good state of preservation, and I remarked with what accuracy they had been proportioned to the compartments they occupy. In the inner sanctuary into which you pass, as usual, through a succession of painted and sculptured halls and galleries, was one of the grandest monoliths that I have yet seen,—an enormous granite throne. The roof to which we ascended is made of huge blocks of limestone five or six yards long, and lighted by small square windows. The immense weight of the roofs of these temples renders the massive and numerous columns, which are such an essential feature of Egyptian architecture, an absolute necessity.

When we entered the temple, some little Arab boys persisted in following us. Pointing to a crocodile painted upon the wall, one of them cried out to me: “*Timsah*, My lord Englishman.”

Seeing from my expression that he had made a mistake, he added with *aplomb*: “*Timsah Françaoni*.” This promising young courtier claimed a bucksheesh for his services.

Not far from the great pylon, among huge mounds of crumbling fragments, piles of brick mixed with pieces of broken plaster and glass, is a small, dark temple, half buried in the sand,—the abode of bats and scorpions. There is only one figure sculptured or painted upon its corroded capitals,—that of Typhon, type of bestiality. This hideous and deformed monster is represented with short, twisted, tottering limbs, a large, pot-bellied, contorted body, and a hideously grinning face,—a grotesque dwarf with the figure of Kabier. This is the typhonium, which the Egyptians always build near their grand temples.

On the very day that we left Edfou, a violent north wind arose, and put a stop to our further progress. We were obliged to moor our craft, and remained for twenty-four hours tossing about on a lonely, forsaken shore.

When at last the wind subsided, the crew returned to their oars and their singing; and soon a friendly breeze coming to our assistance swelled out our little sail. The evening was calm and

serene; and at the hour when the fellah hides himself for the night in his own home, when the sky lights up its stars and the earth falls asleep, we cast anchor before Thebes.

XXIII.

THEBES.

HOW shall I describe my emotion when we stopped at Thebes,—stopped with the intention of remaining for several days, and visiting its monuments?

There are certain places that every one has read, heard, thought about, pondered over, admired, perhaps even has learned to love. So much has been said and written about them that they have become a part of the life of all minds. We visit them in thought, imagine how they look, picture them under a thousand aspects. Hence, when we go to the actual places it is not as strangers,—it is like returning to a sort of spirit-home.

“On approaching Thebes,” writes M. Ampère, “my heart beat as it did when I beheld Rome for the first time: the two places, indeed, suggest each other.”

How true this is, and how true it is of all

great places ! Thebes, Rome, Jerusalem, — it is unavoidable that they should be suggestive of each other ; for in one thing they are all alike, — their pre-eminent grandeur and celebrity. Capitals of the world, their glory belongs to all ages, their name is known in all languages, their history is the inheritance of all peoples. A far greater destiny is theirs than to have rendered a single nation illustrious, or to be claimed by a single people : shedding a light over all ages, and belonging to the whole world, — for have not all nations paid them the tribute of their reverence, admiration, homage ? — they are the pride and glory of mankind.

Rome ruled the world for ages when debauchery and despotism were seated upon her throne ; and, having lost her temporal power, she still reigns supreme in the name of charity and faith.

The holy city of Jerusalem will never cease to sway the heart and imagination of all nations : upon her calvary-throne sacrifice and martyrdom will be for ever crowned.

And Thebes ? The monarch there enthroned is the past. Thebes is the capital of ruins, of magnificent monuments shattered and overthrown, of extinct civilizations, of lost religions. Thebes is the city of tombs.

Our craft had been moored on the shore opposite the city ; and, as we crossed it in the early morning, such, my dear friend, were the thoughts that floated through my mind.

The air was soft and pleasant ; but the red eastern horizon, already beginning to glow heatedly, warned us that the day would be as hot as yesterday had been, as to-morrow would be. This is a happy land where you never have to trouble yourself or inquire about the morrow, at least as far as the weather is concerned. Every morning, striking open the golden gates of the east at the same hour, the faithful sun appears, eager to drive his fiery steeds through the same trackless, cloudless field of azure. Not a breath of wind was stirring, not a sound of human life interrupted the melancholy silence of these once tumultuous shores. As the sailors dipped their oars, the waters of the Nile rippled, and threw into the air little showers of rosy drops.

We landed, and, as the crew fastened the boat to the beach, bestrode our donkeys, and rode over the plain. How mournful, how strangely lifeless and inanimate it looked, outstretched before us, and only dimly visible as yet in the vague glimmering of the early morning ! We rode on

through the thinly scattered clumps of trees, and yellow drooping underbrush languishing in this barren soil. No living thing was to be seen except some flocks of scraggly-looking goats which, as they browsed about, thrust their heads among the plants and tore off the few green leaves glittering with dew. Here and there the dark crest of a dom-palm floated island-like above the sea of rosy vapor creeping low over the ground and dissolving beneath your gaze, while in the distance the angular outlines of huge, massive, shadowy forms could be vaguely distinguished. These were the Libyan mountains, which shut in this desolate plain; and now, as the sun rose above the horizon, their black, precipitous sides, speckled over with innumerable dots,—caverns quarried in the rock,—began to flame as with a sudden conflagration, while their jagged summits pierced the eternal blue.

As the traveller rides along, treading down, hap-hazard, the poverty-stricken vegetation springing out of so many buried generations, buried centuries big with momentous events, he is tempted to ask himself whether this can indeed be Thebes, the *Diospolis Magna*, the city of a hundred gates, whose wealth and splendor dazzled antiquity,—

the city of wonders, whose population was as the sands of the sea, whose caravans traversed the deserts of Asia and of Africa, which received tribute from all known quarters of the globe, and reduced whole peoples to slavery, transplanting them to its own shores. Where are the magnificent temples we have heard so much about? The interminable avenues of sphinxes? The long trains of priests bearing the sacred animals, sweeping before you in solemn, silent processions? And those granite palaces in which the Pharaohs worshipped as gods, and claiming the attributes of gods sat enthroned; upon whose walls was proudly inscribed the history of their triumphs,—where are they? *Etiam periere ruine*, — “Have even the ruins themselves perished?”

Hope not to gain information by inquiring of the shepherds you may chance to meet, for they are ignorant even of the name of Thebes: even the name itself has perished. The monuments of Sesostris and the Pharaohs have been rebaptized, and are known to-day only by the obscure names given by the fellahs to their mud hovels.

On the western shore lie Gournah and Medinet-Abou: opposite are Luqsor and Karnak. Where is Thebes?

Every now and then surging up above the sandy ocean, you see what seem to be two mighty masts, bare, dismantled, sole relics of a storm-stressed, wrecked vessel engulfed in these waves.

Thus appears the Colossi of Memnon, towering up over the plain at about a league from the Nile. Hail, gigantic monuments! Still surviving to show what human strength can achieve, and to mark its limits! Worthy and grand relics of the most tremendous of shipwrecks!

These two figures sixty feet in height, and seated upon their granite thrones, with the arms extended and hands resting upon the knees in an attitude of serene authority, have retained up to the present day an expression of grand repose and imperturbable majesty,—the expression of monarchs who do not intend to be, who cannot be, overthrown. Since the days when eager multitudes thronged at their feet to celebrate the triumph of kings,—sons of the Sun,—what a series of terrible spectacles have they beheld with their granite eyes! To what appalling vicissitudes have they been exposed! As rise and subside the inundations of the Nile, how many civilizations have they seen culminate and disappear! Besieged and mutilated by barbarians,

shaken by earthquakes, ravaged by Time, corroded by the Nile, continuously, pitilessly assailed by the treacherous, stealthy sands, — all these things have they endured, all contemplated ; and yet nothing has succeeded in robbing them of their eternal impassibility, their eternal repose.

With all the pride of former days they still rule over the desert. And when at noon the sun darts down his perpendicular rays upon the plain ; at the hour when the weary flocks, seeking a little shade, come and lie down at the feet of these human mountains, — at that hour, perched upon the head of one or the other of them, seeming to meditate upon the transitory glory of kings and divinities, the mutability of all things human and divine, you will sometimes see a white ibis, with its head tucked under its wing, and its slender form outlined against the clear blue sky.

The more northern colossus, supposed to represent Amenophis III., is the celebrated vocal statue, which in former ages uttered harmonious notes at sunrise. The pedestal and foot are covered with Latin and Greek inscriptions testifying to the truth of the miracle, among which you can read the evidence of the Emperor Hadrian, the Empress Sabina, and a host of other

illustrious visitors, who enjoyed the privilege of hearing the marvellous voice. It is claimed, as you know, that this prodigy can be explained scientifically: that it was due merely to the sonorous vibrating of the stone contracting as the sun drank the dew which had gathered during the night in its hollow cavities,—at least this is one explanation that has been offered. For the rest, since Septimus Severus, with his pious pagan zeal and indignation against Christianity, caused the miraculous statue which had been injured by an earthquake to be restored, the tears of the night seem to have become less efficacious, and the harmonious son of Aurora has lost his voice.

Not far from the colossi is the grand Ramesian palace-temple, the ruins of which are wonderfully beautiful; and in the neighborhood also are the fragments of a colossal statue of Ramses Sesostriis, whose destruction is attributed to the vandalism of Cambyzes.

Although the grand temple of Medinet Amboo has been so terribly ravaged, it is perhaps, at least in a scientific aspect, the most interesting monument in the valley of the Nile. Thanks to the bas-reliefs, sculptures, and inscriptions upon

this temple, *savants* have succeeded in deciphering the history of the most remote periods,—in obtaining definite and accurate knowledge of brilliant dynasties, all trace of which had been lost in the night of time.

Here it is that we find the life of Ramses III. recorded : his expeditions and exploits, his combats by sea and land, are related in full upon the stones of this priceless monument.

It is wonderful to gaze upon this hieroglyphic volume of the past, even when its inner sense is sealed to us ; and I am sure that no one can truly appreciate the achievements of men of science who have wrested so many wonderful revelations from these massive granite blocks, until he has visited for himself the scene of their labors. Among these great authors and investigators, to none have I been more indebted, and none do I recall with more satisfaction, than MM. Champollion, Lenormant, Ampère, and Mariotte, whose profound works and wonderful discoveries have been hailed with enthusiasm by all lovers of science and of Egypt.

XXIV.

THE VALLEY OF TOMBS.

ONE day we visited, by torchlight, a large subterranean vault, the abode of innumerable mummies, which we found dissected, disembowelled, fairly picked to pieces by the insatiable seekers after scarabee and jewels, — ghouls who spend their lives in tombs violating the venerable dead. Soon satisfied with our inspection, we came forth into the daylight again ; and, bestriding our donkeys, rode into a narrow defile shut in by rocky walls and surrounded by a glaring waste of sand.

Winding in and out among the hills like a deep, narrow mountain stream, inundated by the perpendicular rays of the sun, scorched by this perpetual rain of fire, rendered tenfold more intense by the incessant reverberation of light and heat from the blazing rocks and sand, nothing can equal the frightful desolation of this barren, sinuous pass leading to the Valley of Biban-el-

Moluk. No living being is to be seen, and no trace of vegetation ; no sound is heard, save at night when the hyenas interrupt the death-like silence with their howls. Stricken with sun-stroke, Nature lies in a hopeless, unutterable stupor.

White, glaring, ghastly, is this torrid valley : all shades of color being destroyed by the intensity of the light, nothing is left but this one dead, uniform hue. So a fearful conflagration sweeps over green fields gay with flowers, and leaves behind it nothing but a pallid bed of ashes. There is no shade to rest the weary eye, no glimpse of the surrounding country to distract the mind. Even the rocks themselves are changed : their jagged projections, struck by the full force of the sun's rays, seem to flatten out and disappear, — an effect that I have noticed before in tropical countries, — as if drowned in this terrible radiance. No definite outlines can be distinguished : every thing seems blurred and indistinct.

Quivering, vibrating, as over a furnace, the air is flame : you suffocate, and are seized with vertigo. The sand, either because of your dizziness, or the movement of the air, seems itself to move and undulate ; while the sparkling mica with

which it is mixed gives it all the scintillation and glittering of waves. You seem to see a stream of molten lead flowing under your feet ; a torrent of dryness and aridity, for ever fed by cascades of white, hot limestone dust pouring over the burning, jagged walls of the abyss. It is terrible : it makes you think of the day of judgment, when, destroyed by fire, rent open to its burning heart, nothing is left of this beautiful green earth, save a world of ashes, quaking under the footsteps of the terrible Judge come to pronounce our doom. In that hour such rivers will flow.

There was nothing to vary the scene, except the occasional obstructions and abrupt turns in our winding path, over which we rode solemn and silent as a funeral procession. We were more than an hour in reaching our destination.

At last we came to the solitary valley in the heart of the Libyan mountains, which the Pharaohs—those wise old sages who regarded the houses of the living as so many hotels, who expended all their treasures, time, and thought in building tombs,—selected as their last abode. Here they erected those sacred monuments ; quarrying them in the rock, hiding them in the sides of the mountains, so as to render them for

ever impregnable. They believed they had accomplished their object, and, surrounded by a dazzling court of sculptures and paintings, lay down to rest in what they deemed an inviolable sanctuary. Vain delusion! All their labor, their foresight, their cunning, their miraculous achievements, failed to secure them the quiet slumber they so much desired. The first modern travelers who explored these tombs found that they had been violated ages before.

The tombs that fill this valley of death were occupied by the kings of Thebes, of the eighteenth and nineteenth dynasties. They are still in existence, the low sculptured doors opening in all directions in the bases of the mountains.

Here, in the energetic language of the Bible, slept "the powerful among the strong," they who spread terror among the living.

Among them is the tomb of Seti, the first of the shepherd kings who conquered Syria. Leaving his new province garrisoned with Egyptian troops, he attacked Nineveh and Babylon, subdued Mesopotamia and Chaldea, carrying his victorious arms as far as to Armenia. On returning to Thebes, he constructed the palace of Gournah, and the wonderful hypostal hall of Karnak.

It was he, also, who built an artesian well in the desert to facilitate the working of the gold mines of Gebelstolei, and to whom Egypt was indebted for a canal connecting the Nile and the Red Sea. This important work, which was destroyed during a period of barbarism, has recently been restored through the indomitable perseverance and genius of one of our countrymen.

Another remarkable hypogeum, one of the first that we visited, is that of Sesostris, a warrior with a somewhat legendary fame, to whom even more glory perhaps has been attributed than was his due.

Together with the other youth of the court, Sesostris was thoroughly trained in games and the arts of war. Immediately after his father's death, he took command of a powerful army, and traversed Ethiopia, Mesopotamia, and Armenia, at the head of his conquering hosts. He added to the conquests of Seti, put down rebellions, checked invasions, and marked his progress by erecting monuments and columns.

The story of his life is related in the poem of Pentaour, inscribed upon the walls of the Ramesian palace-temple, and recently translated by M. de Rongè. Among other incidents, one marvel-

lous exploit is related, which rendered him for ever famous. Fallen into an ambuscade, he was surrounded by two thousand five hundred of the chariots of his enemies, each of them containing three men, and covering the mountains and valleys, says the poem, thick as locusts. In this desperate strait, Ramses invoked his father, Ammon. "My archers and my cavalry have abandoned me," he cried: "what is your purpose, O my father? Have I not celebrated the most splendid feasts? Have I not sacrificed thirty thousand oxen, with odoriferous herbs and the sweetest perfumes? Have I not brought obelisks from Elephantine, and erected in your honor eternal monuments?" Ammon, in the high courts of heaven, heard his supplications, and renewed his courage. Then Ramses, like the divine hawk, rushed among his enemies, armed with irresistible might. Three times he drove his chariot among them, three times lay low their principal warriors, and at last opened for himself a bloody road over his slain foes, whose corpses lay scattered around in one indiscriminate field of slaughter.

This is the king who is said to have used lions in his battles: he had tame lions, who followed his chariot and fought in his defence.

No less magnificent in peace than famous in war, this great monarch, son of the Sun, erected many of the grandest monuments in Egypt and Nubia. Ibsamboul, and the Ramessian temple of Thebes, are his work ; and to him, also, are due some of the great monuments of Karnak and Luqsor. In Memphis, the fragments of a colossal statue of Sesostris are still to be seen.

His insatiable pride found satisfaction in erecting these gigantic structures ; but this same pride of his led him to commit acts of the most revolting tyranny. It was he who issued the barbarous edict condemning to death all the male infants of the Hebrews. He oppressed the poor Jews cruelly : left completely at the mercy of overseers, who beat and persecuted them, they were employed in the most severe labors, and especially in building cities ; among others, Phithom and Ramesses, as mentioned in the Bible.

Sesostris had one hundred and seventy children, and reigned sixty-seven years with uninterrupted glory.

Next to his tomb is that of his son, Meneptha, which we also visited. It was in the reign of Meneptha that the Jews, released from the power of their formidable enemies by miracles, as re-

lated in the Bible, departed out of Egypt under the guidance of Moses.

Ramses III., like his father, was a famous warrior and conqueror. His glory is celebrated in a poem inscribed on a bas-relief in the temple of Medinet Aboo, where there are also various pictures and sculptures in which he is represented starting on his campaigns. The poem says, in speaking of his great power: "His soldiers are like bulls who rush among flocks of sheep, his horses are like hawks among little birds."¹

The tomb of Ramses IV. comes next in order; and others far too numerous to mention follow. The whole valley is filled with them. Here, whether strong or weak, warlike or peaceful, whether their reigns were long or short, triumphant or obscure, — here slept the kings of Thebes; here were entombed the mighty dynasties who once ruled the earth. Long since, oblivion wrapped them in a winding-sheet as impenetrable as that of death.

The small square doors giving admittance to these tombs were carefully concealed by the

¹ These historical illusions are drawn principally from the admirable work of M. François Lenormant, "*Manuel de l'Histoire Ancienne de l'Orient.*"

builders with enormous blocks of stone or piles of sand. Entering, you pass in succession through long corridors, broad galleries, long flights of stairs, and suites of rooms, all alike carved out of the solid rock. The galleries are sometimes horizontal, but very often are steeply inclined and obstructed with wells, built, no doubt, to render them dangerous, and baffle curious explorers. The rooms are of all shapes and sizes, large and small, square and oblong; the roofs being supported by massive columns ornamented with capitals of women's heads. It is a world in itself, mysterious and appalling,—a kingdom of darkness and silence, penetrating deep, deep into the heart of the mountain.

Multitudes of sculptures and paintings, marvellous in color and most fantastical in design, cover and completely conceal the walls of these palaces of death. It really seems as if the old Theban kings must have amused their idleness by thus adorning their last abodes: granted the privilege by the God of Tombs, who ought surely to have had some compassion for the ennui of his illustrious prisoners: or as if they had been traced by the fantastic and capricious spirits of the mountain.

There is no end to these paintings: long processions of men, of animals, and of gods, — gods, lion-headed, bull-headed, hawk-headed, ram-headed, ibis-headed, — defile before you; while the scarabees, strange plants, jackals, and crocodiles are innumerable. Mystie globes, with mighty wings outstretched, are painted over the doors; sacred vipers rear their heads; and rows of copper-colored Egyptians, wearing the white, close-fitting garment of the slave, and with their faces drawn in profile, are represented offering sacrifices to the dead. Furthermore, there are tables, tiger-skins, strangely shaped furniture ornamented with the heads and claws of lions, and vases holding gracefully drooping lotus-flowers. Lastly, the blue ceiling glittering with golden stars, the only thing reminding you of the living world, and which seems the expression of a regret, represents the sky.

Very many of the scenes and figures are symbolical: the allegorical funerals, which were so prominent in the religious observances of the Egyptians, are painted again and again; and so, likewise, the motions of the sun, the hours of the day and night, tables of the dawn, and the influences of constellations. The voyages of the

sacred ark form another favorite series of pictures: sometimes it is seen gliding over the regularly rippled waters of a lake, and sometimes carried in a procession consisting of four rows of half-naked slaves arranged in lines and advancing with a regular step. In the centre of this symbolical bark, which in shape is not unlike the Venetian gondola, is the sanctuary, where the royal mummy is supposed to rest, and which is always profusely ornamented with funereal emblems. The sharp-pointed prow and stern are both ornamented with ostrich feathers, symbols of justice, and are terminated with a ram's head turbaned with the *pschent*; while long fans of palm-leaves, painted with the most brilliant colors, wave from the corners of the sanctuary. In still other paintings we see emblematical personages distributing punishments and rewards; while the Pharaoh who is found worthy to enter into the felicity of heaven departs to take his seat among the gods.

In some of the rooms the paintings are unfinished, the walls being merely traced with outlines vigorously drawn with black or red crayon; bold, spirited sketches, which seem still awaiting the chisel or the color of the workmen. The pre-

mature death of the king prevented, no doubt, the completion of the ornamentation of these tombs.

In the smaller halls, intended probably for the mummies of the king's officers, the paintings initiate us into the domestic life of the Egyptians, being perfect daguerreotypes of the most familiar scenes. In this picture we see their vessels, weapons, arrows and lances ; we watch them engaged in their domestic avocations or agricultural pursuits ; see the butchers slaughtering oxen, the bakers baking bread ; see the overflowing Nile filling the canals and spreading over the fields. Some are interesting agricultural scenes, representing farmers sowing seed, and others winnowing, gleaning, and housing ; and still other laborers, at some distance off, arranged in lines again, raising stones or transporting trees in panniers suspended from poles. Some are pictures of festivals, sumptuous entertainments : we see the slaves presenting lotus-flowers to the newly arrived guests, and the musicians with their guitars.

At the end of all these halls, corridors, galleries, suites of rooms, there is one chamber larger, richer, and more sumptuously ornamented than any of the others. This gilded room is the

sanctuary in which reposed the royal mummy. Here, adorned with his rings and jewels, his necklaces of enamel and precious stones, swathed in bands of linen, and laid in a triple coffin of sycamore-wood, which in its turn is deposited in a granite sarcophagus, — here, amid all this pomp of seerecy and silence and solitude, the dead king was entombed.

On returning to the dahabieh, we found our saloon literally taken possession of by mummies: shin-bones, thigh-bones, withered arms swathed in linen bands, were scattered over our divans; shrunk, yellow hands, with ringed fingers, were hanging on to our portmanteaus by their nails. Wishing to sit down, I knocked over some heads that rolled under my feet. Horrors of horrors! There was a foot or a hand, I seem to remember, even upon the table itself.

Undoubtedly, the mummy merchants had read Diodorus of Sicily, who states that the corpses of the ancient Egyptians always retained an agreeable odor, and that families liked to have them seated among them at their repasts. Taking this view of the matter, they had prepared this delightful little surprise for us.

We had great tronble in persuading them to

depart with their melancholy merchandise, and, after all, they succeeded in palming off a good deal of it upon us. We decided to keep one head and a few of the smallest hands: the rest was thrown into the river. Strange! In this country whose very religion was a fanatical worship of death, where it was regarded as supremely sacred, it is now so little respected that an unscrupulous trade is carried on with human corpses.

XXV.

KARNAK.

ONE morning we left the dahabieh as early as three o'clock, not only because we were eager to make the most of the brief time we were to spend in Thebes: we were anxious, also, to visit Karnak by moonlight. The pale bride of Osiris, is she not the star of ruins as well?

For about half an hour we walked slowly on. The bare, sandy plain, lighted by the pale rays of the crescent moon, as flickering and uncertain as the fluttering flight of a wounded bird vainly seeking some perch to rest upon, lay outstretched before us in lonely desolation. At last we came upon a mud village standing in a palm-grove: the inhabitants were fast asleep, but the dogs greeted us with fearful howls, which for a long time followed us into the gloom. Soon after, we caught a glimpse of an enormous broad-backed sphinx looming up on the edge of the road, the first of a long line of headless, disfigured monsters,—

fragments of the magnificent avenue of sphinxes which, in former ages, connected Luxor and Karnak.

Our guide, who was an old man with a long, venerable beard, walked before us with slow, measured steps : he had all the dignity and gravity ; — which belongs to the Orientals, and harmonizes so well with their flowing robes, — all that peculiar and almost epical solemnity of deportment and propriety of gesture.

At one moment we stopped to examine a beautiful triumphal arch at some distance in advance of the temple ; but the Arab turned, and we comprehended that we must follow him. There was something strange and solemn in this silent walk through the silent night : it seemed the initiation into some grand mystery ; it was like the prelude to a symphony.

Following our venerable guide, we walked on for some distance to the left, and then again turned to the right. Finally he stopped, and lifting his hand with an authoritative gesture, like that of Moses commanding the sea in the frescoes of Flanders, spoke.

“ We are in the midst of the temple of Karnak,” he said : “ we are at the foot of the obelisks.”

Seating myself upon a block of granite, I contemplated the impressive scene. Before me stretched a colonnade, a gloomy and mysterious avenue, so vast that you scarcely dared dream how vast it was. From this central point indeed, as I now perceived, colonnades and avenues radiated in all directions, looming up vague and dim, and gradually disappearing in the darkness. From my very feet arose the two obelisks, piercing the sky, and seeming with their sharp peaks to threaten the crescent moon. Meanwhile, the whole surface of the earth was covered with the enormous fragments of fallen temples, crumbling granite walls, broken columns, huge blocks of stone wrenched from the earth or toppled down from on high, and flung wildly together like the ruins of a shattered mountain : it was like some wild, formless, primeval chaos. Grand, gigantic, terrible, magnificent,—what words will describe such a scene ? It was all of this,—above all, it was solemn and sublime.

As I glanced up and down the immense height of the obelisks, and gazed into the obscure recesses of the colonnades, seeming to stretch away into infinite space, a sort of terror came over me. And these enormous fragments, overthrown at last,

but only by the assaults of ages, which could not be shattered save by tremendous convulsions, upheavals of the earth itself, and which lie now flung together in that wild, fearful, picturesque grace of chaos and disorder, the secret of which is comprehended by Time alone, that sublime artist, the great architect of ruins, — I gazed upon them in a sort of stupor.

“The rocks God made,” Victor Hugo writes : “man transforms them into the temple.” Yes, but the fallen temple crumbles away, and is re-transformed into the rock. Nature has far more to do with ruins than man : her work it is, far more than his, that gives them their picturesque sublimity ; above all, they are the work of God. Respect them ; for there is nothing grander than death and decay.

As I walked slowly through this forest of columns upholding a granite sky, owls and huge night-birds of all descriptions, startled at my unaccustomed step, came whirring and whizzing out of their holes and crevices in the rocks : terrified, they uttered sharp, shrill cries, and flew in mighty circles over my head. This was the only sound. The beating of their wings, and their discordant voices alone interrupted the silence, or troubled the melancholy of the ruin.

The moon was pale and watery ; its light, sad, vague, and mysterious. Some few scattered rays glittered here and there through the gigantic fissures in the roof, and striking down into the temple fell upon what seemed to be white, motionless figures, standing ghost-like in the hollow recesses.

“Trust to the moon when you visit a ruin,” says Victor Hugo ; “for it is better than a light, it is a harmony. It neither conceals nor exaggerates ; but over the broken fragments it casts a soft, luminous veil, and crowns the old edifices, so majestic in themselves, with a divine, ineffable halo. The ruined palace, the crumbling cloister, are far more effective by night than in the day. The glaring light of the sun is not in sympathy with their desolate grandeur, and seems to insult the melancholy statues, — relies of their past glory.”

Wandering on, I had entered now the great hypostal hall of Karnak, — that sublime ruin ! In writing of this hall, Champollion says : “I could not describe what I see before me even in the simplest, even in the coldest, the most colorless language, without being considered an enthusiast or a madman.” How then shall I speak of

it? How shall I describe to you this palace of giants, built by a people of giants, and which the Arabs of the present day, with their burning southern imagination, believe to be peopled with the phantoms of giants?

We all love the supernatural, all of us at least who have imagination, even although we are not superstitious. The mind seems to have as great a horror of a void as Nature herself. As soon as men disappear, in come the ghosts. These old ruins are the very place for ghost stories and legends and fables: they take root, and grow among them as luxuriantly as the ivy and creeping plants that cling to the old walls.

For my own part, I did not meet a single ghost: no shadowy phantom arose in my path, and with sepulchral voice forbid me to advance; but, in good truth, if there is any place in the world which exceeds all the imagination can conceive of or the reason explain, which with overpowering grandeur thrills us with an admiration mingled with terror, — if there is such a place, it is Karnak.

If I should confess the truth, — and I may as well do so, since I make no pretensions to being above all human weakness, to being armed with

a triple coating of brass,—if I should confess the truth, it would have to be, I am afraid, a melancholy confession of weakness. The fact is, that this ruin, the grandest in the world, seen at this hour, lighted by this pale moon, produced a most singular impression upon me. I felt thrilled,—nay, more!—completely overpowered, by that strange sentiment which the ancients used to call *a secret horror*. When mystery is added to sublimity, how can we help being thrilled and overawed?

It seemed to me that I was dreaming. All that surrounded me was so extraordinary, so colossal, so strange and magnificent; there was such an unutterable serenity in the vague, dim, dreamy moonlight; the whole atmosphere was so pervaded by some mysterious, solemn influence, as if the spirit of the past were hovering there on outspread wings; there was such a strange analogy between the objects that surrounded me, which I knew to be real, which I could touch with my hand, and the imaginary creations of the wildest dreams,—that my mind was filled with the strangest hallucinations.

Are you such a visionary, my dear friend? Have you ever had such an experience?

“Statues sleep in the day-time : in the night they wake and become ghosts.”

This was what I beheld. All these gods with the heads of animals,—the hawk, ibis, wolf, bull, hippopotamus, serpent,—giving themselves up to their inferior, natural life, to which they were subjected by this mystical union, seemed ready to hiss and roar, to spring forth and devour you. The strange figures everywhere covering the walls, standing or lying in stiff, rigid attitudes,—like figures upon tombs,—the monstrous creations, the fabulous beings, animated, by some unreal, phantasmagorical life, glared upon you. The solitude was peopled ; the air was thick with phantoms.

Over the stone lips of the poor, mutilated caryatides hovered a sad, mocking smile ; and the night breeze, as it swept by, was heavy with the sighs of the great granite sphinxes, those huge giants, which, since the brilliant multitudes of Thebes have abandoned them, thronging hither no longer to celebrate the triumphs of the old Pharaohs, have lain in trance-like slumber on the ground.

The enormous women’s heads with their heifers’ ears,—as I walked on over the rough, uneven

ground, I could see them slowly turning on the vast, high-towering capitals. Everywhere, upon the walls, behind the columns, in the dark, gloomy recesses, terrible and mysterious phantoms lurked and cowered: here an enormous giant, with a coiled beard and rigid arm uplifted, haughty and threatening; a serpent with distended throat and hissing tongue; a figure of Isis, waving her arms fringed with feathers like wings; a head of Athos coiled with the mitre, and with a terrible eye set full in a profile face. In this temple of hieroglyphics, as in their rightful kingdom, — a secret, hidden world, — are collected, are represented with appalling reality, all the wild, monstrous creations, the mystic symbols of a grotesque mythology. Wherever I looked, long lines of fantastic apparitions swept before me in endless procession; I could hear the disguised gods and goddesses chuckling together in mocking glee, gibbering and whispering the secrets of the past. It seemed to me that I was wandering in the world of nightmares, or beholding — surprising spectacle! — a masked ball given by Osiris in the palace of Amenthi.

Then, too, the immense, gloomy piles of débris produced the most singular effect. As the

white, flickering moonlight glittered over their polished surfaces, they seemed to be moving: by some strange, optical illusion, which I cannot explain, it gave them the appearance of being liquid. These mountainous piles, overthrown and crumbling for so many ages, seemed still to be crumbling, still to be falling. I could see the process of that mighty decay being accomplished before my very eyes, — a rain of stones, an inexhaustible cataract of rocks, falling, falling, for ever falling, — and all around the silence of death. It was a vision of the creation of ruins.

With the earliest glimmering of the dawn, I left the great hall, and returned to the pylon where we had stopped in the night, so as to explore this wilderness of ruins with some degree of method. The little temple of Kous was the first that I visited; and there I was joined by our friends and the consular agent of Prussia, who, like an honest man as he was, produced some bottles of champagne, — a recollection of our country which was not to be disdained, even among the ruins of Karnak.

After this we went to examine the first pylon of the great temple, — a massive, double pyramid, with an entrance which seems intended for giants

rather than for men. This pylon is three thousand feet in length, and one hundred and thirty-two in height, and is chiefly remarkable for its enormous size. The façade is perfectly simple: there are no sculptures upon it, and no traces of any sort of ornamentation. The side fronting to the north is very much injured; and the summit to which I climbed without difficulty, stepping from block to block of the huge stones of which it is built, is a great mass of crumbling fragments. From this proud pinnacle it was that I beheld the sunrise.

The view was a grand one. I could see the broad Nile, dotted with green islands, as it flowed peacefully between its peaceful banks, clad with a pale verdure; and the Libyan mountains, which, after towering over Gournah, curved grandly in advancing to the south, and swept by Medinet Aboo. The innumerable peaks of these limestone mountains, sharp pointed as pyramids, and succeeding each other like a succession of forts, gleamed like silver in the light of the morning sun. In the vicinity of Biban-el-Moluk was one mountain with a smooth, cone-shaped summit, and base of scarred, precipitous cliffs, that reminded me of a giant wrapped in a cloak hung

with fringes of rock ; — a majestic pall covering with its folds the tombs of kings.

Scanty groups of trees were scattered, like the ruins, here and there over the plain, and relieved in a measure its dreary monotony.

To the right Luqsor was visible ; while directly in front of me stood the great temple, looming up from among prostrate foundations and fallen walls, and looking all the more vast, because of the contrast of its tremendous height with the level sweep of the green Nile plain, gilded towards the east with fields of ripe grain. The level line of the Arabian mountains, half-veiled in bluish mist, and with the sun just peering over their summits, framed the eastern horizon.

After a while I descended and continued my investigations. Passing through the first pylon, you enter a court of immense extent, three hundred and ten feet in width, and two hundred and forty in length ; the whole area rough, broken, and strewn with ruins. A splendid range of eighteen columns is still visible, however, on the left hand, towering grandly over the mighty sand-drifts which have accumulated at their base. On the right hand stands the small and beautiful temple of Ammon, which is

still almost complete: it projects out boldly into the court, and is in the centre of a magnificent colonnade. There was formerly a second pylon at the end of the dromos; but this has been levelled from the base, and lies its length upon the ground.

The grand avenue formed by two rows of gigantic columns that originally led through the centre of the court, and which was its most marvellous feature, has met with the same fate; and so also the granite colossi, that guarded the entrance to the pylon and its splendid perron. Ages ago the mutilated colossi were overthrown, and now so broken and shattered are they that the formless limbs can scarcely be recognized: the steps of the perron are scattered, and the broken columns have disappeared. Only one remains, to prove that the avenue really existed: erect in the midst of the dromos, mournful, solitary, and itself ready to fall, it is like a venerable mourner weeping over a tomb.

From the court you pass into the hypostal hall, the grandest of Egyptian monuments, and itself alone almost as large as Saint Peter's church. Words are so inadequate to give any conception of these enormous dimensions, that I shall trust

to the eloquence of figures. The hall is three hundred and fifty feet long, and one hundred and eighty broad ; and it contains one hundred and thirty-four columns, high and massive as so many towers. Twelve of them, thirty-nine feet in circumference and twenty-five yards high, not inferior to the column in the Place Vendôme, form a grand central avenue, from which extend on either side seven stately aisles. It is a solemn and mysterious forest of stone.

You must not suppose that all these columns are standing. On the contrary, they are in all stages of decay. Some of them, tottering and tremulous, look as if they might fall at any moment ; others have already half fallen, dragging with them portions of the architrave ; and still others are prostrate, and buried in the sand. The ground is strewn with shattered capitals, broken sculptures, columns and fragments of the old architrave written over with hieroglyphics ; and the blue sky is visible through the chinks and crevices in the ceiling.

What sublimity in this appalling decay ! It makes you dizzy to contemplate these huge granite edifices in their ruin, and to think of them in their original magnificence. You can

form no idea, either, of the giants by whom they were erected or destroyed.

Who built them, and by whom were they overthrown? What power was sufficient to have produced these tremendous monuments, what to have occasioned this terrible devastation. Before this could be accomplished it was necessary that all the forces of nature and man should be united. Time, the great destroyer, has assailed them for countless ages; the Nile has undermined them with his corroding waves, the earth as Eusebius testifies, has been shaken to her deep foundations: *Thebæ Aegypti usque ad solum diruntæ sunt*, to lay them low. Nor was all this enough. To the slow assaults of nature man has added his more deliberate and malignant attacks. Whole generations of destroying Goths and Vandals, the barbarous races who conquered Egypt of old, and the armies of modern travellers, who are now invading it, have exerted all their force and ingenuity in defacing and destroying the relics of the mighty past.

Again leaving the hypostal hall, I returned once more to the obelisks, and wandered on through magnificent piles of crumbling ruins. Passing through a grand court surrounded with

a row of mutilated caryatides, I came at last to the inner sanctuary guarded by two headless pillars, adorned with bas-reliefs representing Thoutmès III., standing by the side of the Goddess Athos, and ornamented with lotus-leaves and other sculptures. This sanctuary, which is comparatively small, is built entirely of rose-colored granite, and is covered with sculptures and paintings: here are displayed the colleges of priests, sacrifices, battles, and all sorts of allegories.

Beyond the sanctuary open before you a new series of courts, colonnades, chambers, and temples, all included in the grand temple of Karnak.

The columns, capitals, and walls are ornamented without exception with innumerable sculptures and bas-reliefs. Kings offering sacrifices to solemn-looking gods holding the concoupha flower or the *croix ansata*, or to goddesses, coifed with ostrich plumes, lotus-leaves, globes, serpents, and birds, are among the most conspicuous of the scenes represented. We see also warriors standing in their chariots, shooting their arrows, besieging citadels, driving over their flying enemies, crushing them under their conquering feet, leading them back in chains, and returning in triumph

into their kingdoms to the sound of tambourines, sistres, and cymbals.

These admirable sculptures are pages of ancient history, which *savants* have succeeded in reading, especially the poem of Pantaour, which so pompously relates the exploits of the great Sesostris. I should like to dwell upon them at length, but shall only refer to the bas-relief representing Sesak leading Roboam, king of Judea, in triumph back to Egypt. I mention this because it is a striking proof of the agreement of Science and Scripture.

When you behold, touch with your hands, these magnificent monuments, and think of the civilization that produced them, — civilizations that passed away before Greece was born, before Rome came into existence, — you are dazzled, crushed, overcome with an indescribable emotion. Gladly would I have given you some idea of the impression they produced, gladly would I have recorded my own emotions; but it is in vain. Descriptions are useless, words meaningless, when applied to objects so stupendous and sublime.

Together with the enthusiastic admiration and awe which these ruins awaken, they inspire you with a sentiment of deep melancholy. You feel

how great man was in the past, but you perceive also that his greatness was equalled by his cruelty. Athwart these grand temples, these sculptured columns, you catch a glimpse of millions of slaves, — whips, chains, tortures, groans. Your heart is overwhelmed with compassion when you think that every stone of these ruins has cost the life of a man.

XXVI.

LUQSOR.

THE day that we were to leave Thebes, we devoted almost entirely to examining the temple of Luqsor, a magnificent monument built partly by Amenophis Memnon and partly by Ramses II., the great Sesostris, and belonging accordingly to the most brilliant period of Egyptian history.

I will not weary you with any details about this temple, having already described so many of them, especially as it is so buried in sand, so terribly disfigured and blocked up with mud-hovels, that it would be a difficult matter to give you an idea of its general plan. It is impossible to obtain a good view of it, nor can you examine its ornamentation with any satisfaction. If you want to see a bas-relief or a cipher, you have in the first place to climb over a multitude of wretched huts, or to crawl among them, driving off, meanwhile, the goats, cows, and chickens,

which always form a part of the households of the modern Egyptians, and defending yourself as you can from the ferocious dogs who do not like being disturbed in what they regard as their own domain. All this is not calculated to put you in a contemplative mood.

In front of a grand pylon inscribed with hieroglyphics relating the exploits of Sesostris, stands an obelisk of red granite, which interested me more than any other feature of this ruin. Companion of the one carried to Paris and erected in the Place de la Concorde, it is adorned with sculptures of rare beauty and wonderful distinctness, and looks lonely in its sad isolation, as if mourning that it should not have shared the honor bestowed upon its brother. The sand is drifting over it; and while awaiting the accomplishment of its fate, — that of being buried in the desert, — it is the plaything of Arab children, who, finding sufficient purchase for their little bare feet among its hieroglyphics, easily climb to the top, and amuse themselves by clambering over it. And yet the lonely monument has really no cause to envy the fate of its companion, which is being so rapidly corroded and eaten away by our uncongenial climate; for even up to the present day,

in this glorious Theban sunshine, it has retained all its primitive beauty.

Our crew had been resting for several days, and they returned to their oars with renewed ardor. As we pushed off from the shore, they struck up one of their gayest songs: Micaeli lighted up the craft with Venetian lanterns, and for our part we saluted Thebes for the last time with repeated discharges of our guns and revolvers.

And now that I have mentioned our crew, I can't help paying a sort of tribute to their courage and industry. Often they toil laboriously at their oars for days and nights together, without a moment's rest, except, indeed, when they stop to take their dinner. This is the all-important event of the day with them, and it is one of our daily amusements to watch them partaking of it. A great kettle of rice is brought forth, and squatting around it in a circle they prepare to do justice to the occasion. Each one in turn thrusts in his hand, grabs as much of the rice as he can lay hold of, rolls it into a ball, and pitches it into his mouth with a grunt of satisfaction. Their fare is not very luxurious, but they contrive to devour it with the air of thorough gormands.

The Arabs, indeed, are no less famous for their

greediness than their sobriety : it is said of them, with perfect truth, that nothing can exceed their abstemiousness except their gluttony. I have told you before that their character was made up of contrasts, and you can add this new contradiction to those I have already mentioned.

Stealing onions is one of the favorite exploits of our crew. Whenever an available field comes in sight, and this occurs almost daily, one or the other of them starts up ready for the adventure. Throwing off his clothes, he swims ashore, glides stealthily into the field, and soon returns laden with his precious booty, which gives new zest to their next repast. They take the onions as dessert, and devour them with an astonishing voracity. If the old Egyptians had a passion for onions, you can rest assured that their descendants are not one whit behindhand with them in this respect. Occasionally varying the programme a little, they bring back a prize of sugar-cane stalks ; and then it is worth while to see the poor fellows grinning and displaying their white teeth as they crack the bark.

At first we felt rather disturbed by these thievish propensities, these marauding expeditions of our crew, and considered whether it

might not be our duty to put a stop to them. But Joseph reminded us that even the children of Israel, the chosen people of God, had been guilty of the same offence, at least in heart; that they had sighed for the onions of Egypt, long after Moses had delivered them from their bondage. After this we had nothing more to say; for we felt satisfied that it would be useless to oppose a passion so strong and long-enduring.

But even onions and sugar-cane stalks are not the best of the feast furnished daily to our highly favored crew. When the festive board has been cleared away, the nargile of hashish is produced, and passed around the happy circle. This affords them their sublimest enjoyment; this enchanting pipe throws into the shade the most ravishing vegetable. As each one in turn takes a few ecstatic puffs, their eyes begin to swim and their heads nod dreamily. Poor fellows, they are already foretasting the delights of Mahomet's Paradise.

One day I asked one of the crew with whom I happened to be talking, — a young fellow called Ishmael, a great favorite with all of us, — a very simple and natural question: "How old are you, Ishmael?" "God knows," he answered, rather

haughtily, with an air of mingled bravado and pride: "if He don't, nobody does."

I was a good deal puzzled by this answer, especially as Ishmael had never been guilty of the least impertinence; but Micachi informed me that it was a perfectly sincere statement of the truth; that you never met with an Arab who knows his age; or, if he does, who will acknowledge the fact. This is one of the results of the fatalism by which they are completely enslaved. Their belief in the overruling destiny to which they are subjected is absolute, implicit, unquestioning: they seem to breathe it in with the atmosphere; it colors all their thoughts and feelings, and becomes a part of their life. Believing it to be impossible to help themselves, to exert any free will in the weary march of life, they consider it almost a crime to measure the flight of time.

This Ishmael, by the way, was the Benjamin of our crew. He was still a mere youth not fully grown, and with his deep-set, large, and brilliant eyes, flexible and expressive mouth, regular and delicately chiselled features, was decidedly handsome, as well as intelligent and agreeable. Upon my word, he deserved to have been white. We

have regretted very much that we did not get a photograph of him, in which case you would have seen a really handsome young fellow.

Now that we are descending the Nile, we have one amusement that we could not avail ourselves of in going up the stream, — that of rowing about among the islands. When the heat of the day is over, we order out the skiff, — the dahabieh's little safety boat, — and start almost daily on some such excursion, always taking with us for oarsmen Ishmael and another of the crew whom we have named *Pied-Cousu*, because we caught him once sewing up a cut in his heel. These strong young fellows row us about among the little islands dotted over the Nile, and we amuse ourselves by firing at the water-birds, herons, pelicans, and geese, which are so numerous in this region ; and which, stupid as they look, standing motionless upon their long legs, show great sagacity in avoiding our shots. These birds are so abundant that it is no great credit to bag any amount of game ; but we have to swim in pursuit of every bird we bring down, whether it is killed or wounded, before it can finally be secured. Altogether, it is a curious scene. Can you form any idea of it ? Can you for a moment imagine us

in our Nile disguise? — hunters in bathing suits, rowing about in a little boat, with oarsmen black as midnight, hunting geese and ducks over sand-islands, and jumping into the river to catch our game. The picture at best ought to possess the merit of having some local color.

And, speaking of local color, we flatter ourselves that we shall bring back very positive and practical testimony as to the warmth of Egypt's climate and sun; for we have grown as black as real Barabas, — you will scarcely recognize us. As for our costumes, it would be all in vain for me to endeavor to describe them. Do you remember my superb gray blouse, which was the envy of all who beheld it? Its glory has departed. I have spent a great deal of time in patching it with large pieces of canvas, which I afterwards stain with ink; but it is all in vain. The poor blouse is still full of great holes that I can do nothing with, and which I am constantly mistaking for pockets. I console myself by remembering that in this country ruins are all the rage.

The evenings we spend chatting and smoking upon the terrace: here we sit the greater part of the night, and perhaps at no other time do we enjoy more real happiness. We talk of France,

we talk of our cherished friends and relatives ; or, delving back into old times, recalling scenes that we have not thought of for ages, summon up before us half-forgotten incidents, half-forgotten friends and comrades. In this country of the past, this country of crumbling ruins, it would seem as if one might be in danger of losing his interest in the outside world ; but just the contrary is what occurs. Isolated, solitary, you are forced back upon your own resources ; and your affections, sentiments, all the interests that bind you to life, the ties that attach you to others, assume an importance which they never before possessed. How many names, how many projects, which in France we should perhaps have forgotten, have become sacred to us in Egypt !

XXVII.

THE SANTON AGAIN.

HOW well I remember all these scenes ! The sudden turns in the river ; the jagged, rocky mountains, shutting us in with their beetling cliffs ; the green level shores, — these beautiful changing scenes which we passed in sailing up the Nile, — they look as familiar as old friends. Every thing is as it was : there are the same shepherd-lads lolling about or playing as they lazily guard their flocks ; here are the same troops of buffaloes coming down to the river's brink, either to quench their thirst, stretching out their shaggy necks to meet the rippling wave, or plunging into its depths of coolness. The sakias keep up a perpetual sighing as of old ; the slaves, bending over the shadoofs, utter their melancholy plaint ; the fellahines, as of old, form graceful pictures, wading into the river and filling their jugs ; our crew lean over the gunwales singing their choruses ; and great flights of birds, black or

ivory white, sweep with whirring wings over the gleaming Nile.

To-day we passed the chapel of the celebrated Santon that I told you about, to whom we owed all our misfortunes ; and now, when our voyage was almost over, paid our respects to the worthy saint. Captain Abouset, repenting of his former obedience to us, absolutely refused to pass without performing this sacred duty. Taking the skiff, he went devoutly to obtain the Santon's blessing ; and brought back word that he had promised us fair winds, smooth waters, a pleasant voyage, and a safe return to Cairo. The pestilent old mad-man ! What did he mean by adding irony to his former cruelty ?

Or wait for a moment. Perhaps he was a mere impostor, after all ! It seems to me that we had good cause to doubt his power. Since his blessing proved as ineffectual to avert disaster, it was not perhaps his curse that condemned us to misfortune. I will state the facts, and you can judge for yourself.

When we passed the chapel of the Santon, the wind was fair, our little sail was outstretched to its full extent ; and the dahabieh was darting through the water with that delightful clicking,

singing sound, which a boat makes when it is going at full speed. Never had the scenery looked more enchanting; never had the air been softer and milder. The shores of the Nile were blooming in all their beauty, and we were in the highest spirits. But this was not to last long. Scarcely half an hour afterwards, as suddenly as if it had been lying in ambush behind a grove of date-palms, awaiting our coming, a furious gale leaped upon us like a tiger, almost upset the craft, dashed it up stream, and hurled it violently against the opposite shore.

It was like the swift transformation of a dream : in a single instant the whole scene was changed ! The sky was overcast with flying, gray clouds ; while the Nile, swollen and turbid, fighting with the fearful north wind that resisted its progress, lashed its shores with waves as foaming and tumultuous as the waves of the sea. The sand and dust actually torn up from the beach arose in mighty whirling columns, that stalked threatening along the shores like the ghosts of giants ; while the palm-trees, like delirious bacchantes, bent, and twisted, and shook their dishevelled locks. The heat became every instant dryer and more suffocating ; the sun vainly endeavored to

break through the heavily obscured atmosphere; the horizon closed in upon us nearer and nearer; and the heavy gray pall, overshadowing the sky, grew darker and gloomier.

These sudden and violent heat tempests to which this country is liable have it all their own way when they come: there is no resisting them. We had nothing to do but to shut ourselves up in our craft, carefully close doors and windows, and make up our minds to kill time as best we could while it lasted.

XXVIII.

THE SIROCCO.

STILL the terrible sirocco is beating against our windows, shrieking and wailing so lamentably that you imagine you are listening to the cries of lost caravans perishing in the sands. From my windows I can see the tormented trees writhing and twisting ; I can hear their branches groaning and creaking ; the birds have all disappeared ; and the frightened date-palms, with their feathery crests high in the air, look like umbrellas turned inside out.

The Nile is livid, and in as great a state of agitation as a man burning in the delirium of fever. Far more angry and turbid than the Rhine ever becomes in the wildest storms, it fringes its shores with a beard of foam, and keeps the dahabieh rocking with a regularity that is perfectly unendurable. You know how painful any annoyance of the kind becomes when long continued.

Amid all this gloom, this agitation, the mind can find no rest, no relief. It is impossible to describe the peculiar monotony of movement which you see everywhere, from which nothing seems able to escape: the sand is whirled through the air, the clouds scud over the sky, the trees toss their arms, the water seethes and roars, the wind whirls and raves. Every thing is shaking and quaking: there is not a line of the landscape that does not oscillate. It seems as if Nature, fallen into a fearful convulsion, was trembling in every nerve and fibre; as if repose and balance and order had vanished for ever, leaving the universe tumbled back into chaos. No words can tell how you suffer in being obliged to contemplate such a scene for a length of time: a peculiar weariness oppresses you; your eyes are dazzled; your brain reels with vertigo, as if in sympathy with a reeling universe; and your mind is utterly bewildered.

Fleeing from the sirocco, we took refuge in our saloon, grateful for even that asylum. Here we remained, smoking, reading, talking, or trying to sleep; but before the day had passed we were startled by a hubbub on shore, a confused babbling and shouting of human voices; and hur-

rying out we saw that a whole village, in spite of the sirocco, had come pouring down upon us. Crafts are not in the habit of stopping upon this shore, and the presence of strangers had driven these poor people almost beside themselves. There was a perfect throng of them: children, uglier and filthier than ever, it seemed to me, were running about, gabbling, and, as usual, shouting, "Bueksheesh, Howadji!" The women stared at us, without even remembering to drop their veils; the men pointed to our guns with envious admiration; and some old ragged hags, veritable witches of Macbeth, begged us with most demonstrative gestures for a pinch of tobacco, as if we should have been likely to have a supply at their service. Among all the collections of fellahs that I ever saw, this was among the most degraded and disagreeable.

Before long my attention was attracted by quite a good-looking young man — tall, with a regular, expressive face, and a firm, dignified bearing — forcing his way through the crowd. He was supporting, or almost carrying rather, an old man, white as a ghost, bent double, thin, and trembling convulsively in all his limbs, — evidently in a terrible fever. They came on to the edge of the boat;

and the old man, who could scarcely move, and who was uttering low moans without knowing it, had just strength to lift his head, gaze upon us with his lifeless, cavernous eyes, and clasp his hands in supplication.

These poor people had seen the craft of the European from the village; and in spite of the sirocco, in spite of this furious desert wind, the son had carried the father for more than a league, in the hope of getting him cured. This tottering old wretch, scarcely able to support himself, he had brought to us, believing that we could save him.

It will not be news to you, I am sure, that all Europeans have the reputation among these poor Egyptians of being infallible physicians; and as travellers always come provided with medicine-chests, — a necessary precaution in a country where there are no apothecary shops, — they can scarcely avoid playing the part of physicians. I imagine that almost all of them dispense their medicines freely to the poor people who apply to them: certainly the French do. This was the secret of the old man's visit, — only one of a great number of similar experiences that we have had. Again and again the sick and weak have been

brought to us to be cured: they always display the most touching reliance in our ability to assuage all their ills. If faith still works miracles, they ought certainly to be benefited, by their own confidence, if not by our assistance.

But the case now before us was an exceptional and aggravated one. This poor old man, trembling like a dry leaf just ready to fall, was evidently the victim of an incurable malady, and beyond all human help. What could we do for him? Nothing, of course; but it would not have done to say so, for this would have deprived him of his only solace,—hope. We gave him a strengthening potion, which could not at all events injure him, and at the same time made his son a present of some rice. They went off quite contented, hopeful and joyful. The old man really seemed to walk with a firmer step, and they turned repeatedly to express by signs their gratitude and good wishes.

This reputation which we enjoy of being physicians has really at times burdened us with a responsibility which we would far rather have avoided. We have had the crew to look after of course, and as they have met with no end of accidents we have sometimes had our hands full.

One of them one day lost two of his fingers ; while raising the anchor, he made some blunder, and they were severed by the chain. Then they have had sun-strokes, threatenings of ophthalmia, wounds, bruises, and all sorts of ills that flesh is heir to. Once a perch flew into the cook's face out of a frying-pan, and almost put his eyes out.

On such occasions, Vincent, who is the man of most judgment and experience among us, donning his robe of authority, and taking his medicine-chest and medical dictionary, would seat himself in state ; and after the rest of us had gathered about him, the consultation would begin. When the case chanced to be a difficult one, the wound swollen and envenomed, I can assure you that we used to feel an awful weight of responsibility resting upon us. Arnica or *l'eau blanche*, collodion or sulphate of zinc, — which should we administer ? Which was the true prescription ? We would talk it all over, hold a solemn consultation, and finally act according to the best light we had. One thing was satisfactory : whatever we did always turned out for the best. Thanks to the salubrious climate of Egypt, how many wonderful cures we have wrought !

Sometimes we would fall back upon Doctor

Sangrado's method, and order pure cold water; a remedy that could not fail to be beneficial whatever the special ailment, in view of the Arab's well-known and confirmed passion for dirt.

XXIX.

RESTING ON THE OARS.

MISERABLE prisoners of the tempest, here we are still resting on our oars, still anchored to the shore. For five days we have been tossing about on this wretched sand-bank, and still there is no prospect of relief. The sirocco is as furious as ever: it goes sweeping by, whirling sand-drifts and uttering its terrible lamentations. You will scarcely credit it, perhaps: but it is a fact that large vessels are constantly passing us, driving up stream with all their sails furled. The force of the current is completely nullified by the violence of the wind.

To complete our misfortunes, we shall soon be out of provisions: we are already on short rations. There is no more wine, and Micaeli's three kind of sweetmeats are at last exhausted.

How weary, how endless, have seemed the long hours of these terrible days! It has required all our philosophy to reconcile us to this sirocco in-

flition, or rather to enable us to endure it with any sort of patience. Sometimes it has seemed as if the recollection of all the brilliant scenes we have visited and enjoyed so much afforded us no compensation for our present suffering; as if the delights of a Nile voyage were overbalanced by its annoyances. But this was a most ungrateful and irreverent conclusion, which we disavowed, of course, as soon as the sirocco subsided.

Tired out with being shut up so long in the craft, worn to death with its constant rocking, and with hearing nothing but the chopping and washing of the waves striking against the keel, we resolved to-day that we would go ashore in spite of fate. Well, we carried out our determination, but did not gain much by the change. The suffocating wind and sand choked and blinded us; we were caught up in eddies and whirled along like pieces of straw; it was even worse than aboard, and we were glad enough to get back to the terrace.

In going over the bank, by the way, we came upon a new sort of Egyptian curiosity. The soft, pliable soil was filled with multitudes of little holes, scarcely large enough for the hand to pass through them; and as we disturbed the colony, for

so it proved to be, a flock of sparrows flew out, and fluttered in great alarm over the bank. The birds here are very industrious, you perceive, and have the mania of the old Egyptians for building secret and lonely retreats. Egypt is the land of mystery; and whoever breathes its atmosphere becomes mysterious, — is seized with a passion for seclusion and solitude, a passion for hiding himself in the bowels of the earth. We have seen now grottoes of all descriptions, magnificent hypogeums and tiny abodes, — the sepulchres of kings and birds' nests.

Thank heaven! the sirocco is over. About noon a lull in the storm began to be apparent: the wind subsided, the sky brightened; and on the opposite shore, so long hidden by clouds of drifting sand, appeared a ribbon of verdure, like a smile, like a promise of better days. Gradually the sun consumed the heavy vapors by which it had so long been enshrouded; through rifts in the clouds little lakes of blue sky could be seen; and these clouds rapidly dissolved, faded away, until nothing was left but a glorious blue vault swept with white cloud-fields, soft, tufted, fleecy, undulating, — looking, in short, like a flock of lambs.

Egypt has reappeared in all her splendor, in

all her beauty. This poor Egypt, it is always in extremes; it is either divine or terrible; the fertile, luxuriant garden, or the barren desert. Made to smile eternally under a vault of stainless azure, to be lighted eternally by a cloudless sky, it is its fate, notwithstanding, to be visited by the most fearful of tempests; and when they come the whole country seems to be annihilated. Egypt hides her head, and seems to disappear.

We hauled in the anchor instantly, and rowed off at swiftest speed from that fatal shore.

XXX.

KIER-EL-KEBIR.

ON the very same evening we passed Kier-el-Kebir, the scene of the revolution that we heard about at Kench, and by which we came near being victimized. The scenery here is very grand: the broad, semi-circular plain is surrounded by a high, rocky wall, reaching out to the shores of the Nile; the summit of these mountains is as smooth as if levelled off by a road. The undulations are very few and slight, as if the hand of the great Artist who traced this grand line upon the sky had sometimes been slightly tremulous.

Five or six villages were in sight, and I felt sufficient curiosity to go on shore and examine them. The scene was horrible beyond description. Everywhere the villages had been bombarded, sacked, and pillaged; the mud cabins were riddled with balls, staved in, thrown down;

the stones everywhere in the vicinity were stained with blue powder-marks like the slabs in a shooting gallery. The soldiers, knowing what a mania peasants have for hiding their money, had destroyed every thing, searched every nook and corner, dug up even the earth, in the hope of finding a prize.

On returning to Cairo, I learned from the consul that the revolt had been organized by a religious fanatic, who claimed to be a saint, and who counted among his adherents all the brigands the country could boast of. This getter-up of revolutions had visited the different villages, kindling the imagination of the too credulous fellahs. The programme was an attractive one : the insurgents, about fifteen hundred men, without arms or ammunition, were utterly to exterminate their oppressors, both Turks and Europeans, to dethrone the Viceroy, and share among them the fertile lands, the harvests, and the harems of Egypt. The saint promised, moreover, eternal salvation to all those who would have faith and assist him in this good work. But being a revolutionist is a poor business in Egypt. The luckless army of the fanatic began and ended their exploits with pillaging the craft of some travel-

lers, and destroying a few sugar refineries in the neighborhood. Before they could do more, the regiments of Ishmael Pacha came pouring down upon them, and drowned the very thought of rebellion in blood. The slaughter was indiscriminate. The women and children were all massacred without mercy, and their bodies hung upon the trees on the shores of the river. Some few of the insurgents succeeded in effecting their escape, but they were pursued and tracked to the mountains.

It was horrible to walk through the streets of these deserted villages, and think of the scenes that were enacting in them only a few weeks ago. Great God ! as with a fearful tempest, the whole country has been swept by fire and the sword. Prowling about among the ruins, stained with blood, howling piteously, and scratching with their paws at the hovels whence issued the loathsome stench of dead bodies, were a few famished, hideous dogs ; but I saw no human being except one wretched skeleton of a woman. Why had she come back to this scene of death, poor creature ! Perhaps to look for her child. I offered her a bucksheesh, but she did not even notice it. As soon as she caught a glimpse of

me, she fled, uttering fearful shrieks, and vanished I know not where.

For quite a long distance the shores were lined with these sacked, these annihilated villages. The trunks of the palm-trees also were all scorched and blackened, and squads of soldiers were patrolling about, guarding the armies of laborers who had been summoned from all quarters by order of the Pacha, and were busily engaged reaping the harvests of the victims. Before very long we came in sight of the camp, looking as gay and picturesque with its blue and white tents dotted over the plain, as if it had been the sign and refuge of war. Trumpets were sounding, merrily awaking the sleeping echoes; and groups of soldiers were lounging about, and smoking in the palm-groves.

The wind continued fair, the crew rowed vigorously; and the dahabieh, darting through the cleaving waves, bore us swiftly, to our great relief, beyond this region of death, scented with the blood of wretched human beings. The scenery now was marvellously beautiful. Lofty palm-groves, stately sycamores, and tamarisks, growing along the very edge of the river, with their waving branches reflected in its gleaming waves,

lined the shore as with an impregnable bulwark of verdure. These are the first of the magnificent gardens that surround Asyoot with a broad belt of shade, and so wonderfully enhance its beauty.

XXXI.

BENI-HASSAN.

WHATEVER else may be thought of Egypt, who will deny that it has a delightful and salubrious climate? However degraded, it is still the magnificent child of the sun.

“In the reign of Psammeniti,” says Herodotus, “a very great prodigy occurred in Egypt: there was actually a shower at Thebes. This had never happened before, and has never happened since, up to the present day, as the Thebans themselves assert; the one instance which I have mentioned being the only exception.”

Take my advice, my dear friend, and put no confidence in those fault-finding, petulant travellers, who visit Egypt only to see clouds and shiver with the cold. Victims of their own ill-humor, they are very much to be pitied. To the jaundiced eye every thing looks yellow, and he who wears blue spectacles beholds a blue universe: be yourself out of harmony, and all things

are discordant. So it is with these captious tourists who declare that the Nile is a muddy, turbid, uninteresting river, and that the sky of the Orient is dull. Poor creatures! they are very much to be pitied. Going about wrapped in a cloud of discontent, they see nothing but clouds: they wear gray spectacles, and declare that the universe is gray. The most magnificent ruin is nothing to them but a fantastic heap of hideous rubbish, not worth the trouble of a visit. Why, they are even incapable of appreciating the adorable little donkeys that so captivated my heart and imagination. I have even heard of some among them who deny that there is a yearly inundation of the Nile: they laugh with contempt at this ridiculous fable, invented by some old romancer, and which, as soon as people become more enlightened, will be consigned to oblivion.

Well, let them have their way. The best thing we can do is to avoid them, with the charitable hope that they may enjoy their spleen, since this shuts them out from so many other sources of enjoyment. For my part, I stand by Herodotus, and do not fear to assert that a shower in Thebes is almost a miracle. There is no word in the Egyptian language, I understand, to express the

humidity of caves, the oozing of grottoes; nor is this strange, for the thing itself is unknown.

This is proved by the condition of the statues, especially the wooden statues, found everywhere in the innumerable tombs, grottoes, and caverns of Egypt. These statues are as fresh and smiling now as when they were placed in these sanctuaries perhaps five thousand years ago: the delicate papyrus leaves are unchanged; while the paintings of the earliest dynasties have retained, in the most extraordinary manner, the original splendor of their coloring.

We saw a good illustration of this on the day that we visited the grottoes of Beni-Hassan, whose frescoes are of the greatest interest and importance to the student of Egyptian antiquities.

Nothing is known about the infancy of Egyptian art. How the race began its career will for ever remain a mystery. The first of the early monarchs who seems to possess any distinct individuality is King Cheops or Khoufou, who looms up in early history with all the grandeur of the pyramid of Gizeh. Sharing the fate of other great heroes, this magnificent king and conqueror stands as the representative of his age, whose virtues and vices alike, according to tra-

dition, he embodies. In his reign Egypt was free and pre-eminently prosperous, as the paintings that have descended to us show. The fertile valley was gay with waving harvests; mighty vessels, with their large sails outspread, floated upon the Nile; wealth abounded, commerce was flourishing, while art (the admirable statue of Cephren so much admired at the universal exhibition is a good specimen of the art of this era) attained a degree of perfection which was not exceeded or even equalled in the most flourishing of the later epochs. As early as in the fourth or fifth dynasties, in a word, Egypt already appears before us in all the bloom and glory of a strong, vigorous, and rapidly developing youth.

But civilizations, like every thing else, have their periods of weakness: they culminate and decline; they rise and fall; they have their plenitudes and their eclipses like the planets or the sun. This flourishing epoch of the ancient civilization was followed by a long period of comparative barbarism, the cause of which is not understood, and probably will never be explained.

This eclipse lasted for ages: it was not until the twelfth dynasty — the period of the construction of the Labyrinth and Lake Moeris — that

civilization and art revived, and started anew in a splendid career.

The formidable invasion of the shepherd kings checked this new development, and the brilliant renaissance of the twelfth dynasty was succeeded by a second decadence. The art of this era has perished almost entirely: only a few fragments have come down to us,—the obelisks of Heliopolis and the colossi recently discovered by M. Mariotte. The furious conquerors, however, who ruthlessly destroyed the most magnificent monuments, who overthrew temples and palaces, spared at least the tombs of the people they had vanquished; and it is from the paintings and sculptures of these tombs, especially the precious specimens found in the grottoes of Beni-Hassan, that we have obtained our knowledge of the condition of art during the second flourishing epoch of the old empire.

The most striking feature in Egyptian art is the calculated rigidity of all the figures, the uniformity of their poses and similarity of their gestures. Moreover, we cannot fail to be impressed by the fact that the formality, the conventional idea of symmetry to which nature and grace are sacrificed, has a charm of its own, and is not inconsistent with majesty and expression.

“The human figure in Egyptian paintings is well deserving the closest study,” says Charles Blanc. “Although details are overlooked, with what boldness, precision, and even with what delicacy it is drawn ! The lines are severe and grand ; the attitudes are rigid and majestic ; the legs, for the most part, are parallel and joined ; the feet touch, or, if one is in advance of the other, they move forward in the same direction, and are exactly parallel ; the arms hang straight, or are crossed upon the breast, unless, indeed, they are separated, that the hands may hold some object, — a sceptre, the *croix ansata*, or lotus-flower. But even this movement or rather situation, this gesture or rather sign, is merely the representation of some solemn and cabalistic pantomime. There is no life, no action : the pose of the figure is predetermined, and you feel that it will be permanent. There is no suggestion of any change of position.

“When several figures are represented, they are arranged in parallel lines ; and their limbs move in unison, as if obeying some mysterious rhythm regulated in the sanctuary. The surest method of expression, indeed, which Egyptian art employs, is repetition.”

The paintings at Beni-Hassan are an exception to this rule. In them the conventional formality and rigidity of the Egyptian style is less apparent, less absolute: the figures are freer, more life-like and expressive. It is evident that art is tending in the direction of realism: it is studying nature, and trying to copy it with fidelity. There is an elegance in the drawing, and an action in these figures, which is wanting in the paintings and sculptures that adorn the most magnificent monuments of Thebes. There are even some efforts at perspective drawing. I noticed a row of oxen taken in three quarters, and very happily rendered.

And yet these hypogeums, these paintings, date back to a much earlier period than the tombs of Biban-el-Moluk or the oldest ruins of Thebes.

How was it that Egyptian art failed to carry out all that it seemed to promise in starting? What caused it to deviate from the true path? Since the civilization of Egypt was the oldest of all, the development of its art must have been determined exclusively by the genius of the race: unable to borrow any thing from other nations, it could not have been led astray by outside influences.

Hence it is in the history of Egypt itself, and there alone, that we must seek for the true cause of this deviation.

The invasion of the shepherd kings was followed by a long period of decay and barbarism, after which Egypt again revived and attained the climax of her power and glory during the eighteenth and nineteenth dynasties. Then it was that the wonderful temples of Luqsor and the hypostal hall were erected. But, magnificent as these temples are, there is a change and falling off in the painting and sculpture with which they are adorned: they no longer display the grace and movement of the more primitive paintings. We feel that art has lost its early freedom; that it has become a part of a great political and religious machine in which every thing moves with the regularity of the stars. Enslaved by priestly regulations, it ceased to imitate nature and was subjected to an arbitrary law of proportion: it ceased to be realistic, and became symbolical.

This is the explanation of the invariable rigidity of Egyptian figures, and the identity of their gestures. All this was premeditated: the adoption of this style was ordered by the priests to produce a certain effect. Hence the symmetrical,

ritualistic, and formal character that Egyptian paintings assumed, — their immobility, fixedness, and mysterious intensity. The artist having no freedom, no power to choose what effects he would produce, could give no expression to his individuality: his genius had no scope. Art ceased to be the expression of the individual mind, and became a sort of mathematical formula. All the figures are symbolical. The individual is sacrificed to the type, variety to uniformity. It is the caste, the class, the race that is represented, — never the one individual, with his distinctive features, character, expression. A thousand slaves, or a thousand priests, are depicted in different attitudes; but it is always the same slave and the same priest.

Egyptian figures are not drawn rudely or carelessly, but according to an arbitrary rule: this is their one peculiarity. The type selected is remarkable for its grandeur, its simplicity, and purity; but the artist is not allowed to deviate from this type. He is obliged to employ it on all occasions. Under such circumstances, art, of course, becomes merely a sort of picture-writing; and this was all it was intended to be. That the artists were prohibited from copying nature, is

evident. The spirit and fidelity of their rendering of animals shows that it was fully in their power to have done the human figure equal justice, if this had not been opposed to the commands of the Egyptian priests.

“If Egyptian art had not been stifled in its very infancy; if it had not been made a mummy of by being swathed in sacerdotal bands, there is every reason to believe,” says Charles Lenormant, “that it would have developed as grandly as did Greek art at a later period: absolute perfection would have been attained two thousand years before Phidias.”

Meanwhile there is no sort of doubt that Greek art drew its first breath of life on the shores of the Nile. It was from the monuments of Egypt that it derived its inspiration. It is interesting to observe at the entrance of the hypogeums of Beni-Hassan the first Doric columns probably that were ever made: cut out of the rock, fluted, and surmounted by capitals, they are of wonderful beauty, and were beyond a question the originals of the Doric columns which the Greeks afterwards carried to such marvellous perfection.

A final and complete decadence succeeded the reign of Ramses II., the great Sesostris,—a deca-

dence which was followed by no revival, which was the initiation of a fatal decay. Under the Saïtes and Ptolemies, indeed, many grand monuments were erected, thanks to the influence of Greek art, which had now grown vigorous, and returning to the land of its birth seemed destined for a time to reinspire the sublime but tottering civilization, from which its own life was derived. But, instead of accomplishing this, it only served in reality to hasten its fall. Egyptian architecture, it is true, preserved for some time longer the severity of its forms and grandeur of its proportions. Denderah and Esneh were both built after this period. But, notwithstanding, the spirit, the very soul that had animated the art of the early dynasties, was destroyed by coming into contact with the genius of another people. It gradually lost its distinctive characteristics: its severity was softened, its traditions were forgotten, until the idols of the worship of Osiris were finally overthrown; until the hieroglyphics that had adorned its temples were effaced and destroyed by the bigoted fury of the early Christians. The last temples of Athos and Osiris became the first Christian churches.

The hypogeums of Beni-Hassan are excavated

in the steep flanks of the Arabian chain, and command a magnificent view of the valley of the Nile. These tombs were appropriated entirely to the military caste, and they differ in aspect and size ; some being small caves having no sort of interest, while others are immense halls surrounded by columns, carved out of the rock, and richly ornamented.

The paintings in these halls are descriptive of the domestic and agricultural life of the ancient Egyptians.

We see among them wrestlers practising gymnastics ; tugging and fighting, thrown down and again lifted from the ground. We see sculptors finishing and painting their statues, and armies of workmen transporting colossi ; hunters hiding behind trees, on the watch for birds, which are also seen flying through the air ; while there are still other paintings of wild animals surrounded in parks, and riddled with arrows.

Then there are the well-known paintings of country scenes: oxen and donkeys drawing carts ; men digging the earth with pick-axes ; slaves watering the gardens, or filling vases from marble fountains, or working shadoofs exactly like those used at the present day.

In some of the scenes, men are weighing goods in scales, or heaping up flowers upon tables, or offering sacrifices to the gods. Criminals stand cowering in the judgment-hall, and on being pronounced guilty are beaten on the soles of their feet, just as the fellahs are punished at this very day. Jugglers, dancers, women with guitars, carriages, palanquins, boats full of fishermen spearing fish with pikes,—all sorts of characters and incidents are represented, with their appropriate surroundings. You could spend hours or whole days in examining these interesting frescoes with profit and enjoyment. But I should like to know why it is that there is not a single camel or horse among all these paintings: it seemed to me a curious omission.

One of these pictures is very famous. The scene is laid in a large hall, where a distinguished official, evidently of high rank, is seated upon a sort of throne with a scribe by his side, who offers him a roll of papyrus, and at the same time introduces to him a family of foreigners standing humbly before him,—men, women, and children, all grouped together. For a long time it was thought that this fresco represented Jacob and his family, after their emigration from Canaan;

but it is perfectly certain that these hypogæums were built long previous to the appearance of the Israelites in Egypt. Champollion imagined that they were prisoners; but Doctor Lepsius called attention to the fact that the men were armed, and that the party had with them their musical instruments and baggage. They must therefore have been emigrants, making the same request that Jacob and his children preferred at a later period, — begging to be received in this favored land.

The colors of these frescoes are wonderfully well preserved. After all these ages, the blues, and especially the greens, are perfectly distinct, and have even retained a good deal of their original freshness.

On the day that we left Beni-Hassan, we were brought into closer proximity with one of the large slave ships that I have told you about than was at all agreeable. For quite a distance the wind and current kept us together, and at one time we floated side by side, so that we could examine the ship and its cargo at our leisure.

It is astonishing how many of these wretched barbarians can be crowded into these horrible prisons. On this ship there were Abyssinians,

negroes from Darfour, women of all shades, jetty black and of a light bronze; there were mulattoes, young girls, and even children, — and all, with scarcely a few rags to cover them, herded together like wild animals, — flung one upon the other, in a horrible promiscuousness. With the sun glaring down upon their bare heads, they sat in a dull apathy, staring stupidly at the river which was sweeping them into slavery.

The traders were lounging upon the poop, where a handsome tent was erected to protect them from the sun. They were smoking, chatting, and seemed to be enjoying themselves vastly. On seeing us, they nodded and smiled in the most affable style. The conclusion to be drawn from their high spirits was that they had had a prosperous voyage. No doubt they had lost comparatively few of their booty, and had succeeded in keeping them from dying of hunger without too much expense. In a very short time this rich freight of merchandise would be sold in the market-place at Cairo, and each slave would be worth seven or eight hundred francs. Surely the traders had good cause to be happy and smiling.

Friend, there is something in the mere thought of slavery that is horrible and shocking; that

wounds all our sensibilities and offends all our conceptions of right. It is a degradation to each one of us : it is an insult offered by man to the whole human race. It is bad enough to think of slavery as an abstract wrong ; but to see with your own eyes the suffering slave is heart-rending. The mind is aroused and indignant at the thought of slavery : at the sight of the slave the heart bleeds. You cannot forget that the poor man you are gazing upon, or the little girl, have been hunted, pursued, driven at bay like wild beasts ; that they have been torn from their country, from their parents, from all they hold dear ; that they have been dragged into a terrible exile, where every human being is their enemy, and where the price of their freedom will only serve to enrich their executioners.

We were thankful when the craft at last sped on in advance of this gloomy bark ; but the impression left upon my mind could not be at once dissipated. The scenery was beautiful, the sun shone gloriously ; but all day long I saw before me those emaciated, haggard faces. They haunted me with their sad gaze of patient, hopeless resignation, of utter despair.

But why torment one's self about the fate of these

few barbarians, when so many are in like misery, when all the fellahs are most abject and unfortunate slaves? One would really suppose that the days of Sesostriis and the Pharaohs had returned. It seems to me that the modern despotism is quite as eruel and unjust as the aneient; nor can I understand how any one, unless he is completely dazzled by the blandishments of the Paeha, can watch the operations of this government without being on fire with indignation.

I have told you about the poverty and wretchedness of these poor fellahs: I have deseribed to you the mud hovels in which they spend their lives, no doubt to your amazement. Is it not indeed wonderful that this should be the condition of the people in a country like Egypt, — a country that is the spoiled child of Nature, which can boast of the most matchless elimate, and where the harvests are certain and luxuriant, — where the government has it in its own power to secure the fertility of the soil?

“The administration,” says Napoleon, “cannot make the rain which falls at Beauce or in Brie more or less; but in Egypt the government can exert a direct influence upon the extent of the inundation which takes the place of rain.”

Egypt is a country where, with a good government, there would be no limit to the prosperity of the people. As it is, the avarice and cruelty of the administration have reduced the whole population to the most frightful poverty and misery.

I wish, with all my heart, that socialists would come and see their theories put in practice in Egypt. They would soon find out that they result in establishing the most frightful despotism, and would perhaps be convinced that the right of the individual to his own property is the best security against tyranny. Every year the Nile overflows and enriches Egypt; but it is the Pacha alone who is benefited by this great miracle of Nature, by which the whole people ought to be enriched, and would be under a different administration.

In Egypt there is only one land-holder, one merchant, one cultivator of the soil; namely, the government. The Pacha can say with much more truth than Louis XIV., "*L'état, c'est moi!*" The fellah is looked upon as a mere machine, to be worked to the utmost,—as an orange, good for nothing but to be squeezed.

When any public enterprise is undertaken, when the Pacha wants a canal dug or a dike built,

officers are sent to collect as large an army of fellahs as may be required, — whether five or ten thousand; and they are forced to toil at this government job as long as may be necessary to accomplish it, whether two or five months, or a year.* Then the poor creatures, the richer only for the stripes that have been rained down upon them, are allowed to return to their villages. The government seems to consider stripes and blows, when the fellah is to be paid, as its most available currency.

One day I passed a canal, not yet completed, — one of the Viceroy's enterprises, — and saw how it was all managed. Thousands of wretched fellahs, completely naked, were swarming like so many ants in the ditch, which was half-filled with water; while the overseers stood on the bank, ready with their eudgels in case of the slightest deviation from duty. These unfortunate human beings had not even been provided with tools, and were digging up the earth with their hands.

But the tax-gathering season is the great bugbear of the year. A crowd of collectors spread over Egypt, as numerous and destructive as one of the plagues sent forth by Moses. They go from village to village, claiming a tribute, which

of late years has been arbitrarily doubled, and even tripled. If the fellah is too poor to meet their demands, he is endgelled until the money is found; while, on the other hand, if he pays at once, without waiting for the spur of the bastinado, he is suspected of being rich, and becomes the victim of his cruel persecutors. He is accused of some imaginary crime, and condemned to the galleys: his sons are enrolled in the army, and there they all remain, until a considerable ransom has been paid. Thanks to the cultivation of cotton in which they engage, some few of the fellahs succeed in laying up a little property; but they are careful to hide their money, and those who are richest among them pretend to be the poorest. And not because they are afraid of brigands: their enemies are the police and the government.

The fact is, my dear friend, that Egypt, like the rest of the Orient, is in a fatal decline. Coming into communication with Europe has killed it. I cannot help feeling that the present civilization of Egypt, the outgrowth as it is of Mahometanism, of the Koran, of a belief in fate, and rendered stationary by that belief, resembles the machine-like religions and political organiza-

tion of ancient Egypt. Unlike the civilization of modern Europe, it is incapable of growth, and hence cannot be improved, cannot be perfected. It is not a living tree, but a finished temple; and, in spite of its apparent strength, is weak. Remove a single stone, and the whole building falls. When ancient Egypt, becoming aware of its weakness, tried to lean upon Greece, it was hopelessly lost; and the intercourse now established between modern Egypt and Europe will have precisely the same effect. The European customs and manners which the Pachas are endeavoring in the most stupid manner to incorporate are so many daggers striking to the heart of a feeble organization already upon the point of dissolving, — an organization which has the capital defect of being an anachronism in the age in which it is still allowed to exist. How long will Europe overlook the enormities committed by this government? How long allow this phantom of the past to claim a place among living states? I do not know; but the Pachas are perfectly well aware that their last hour is approaching. They are making the most of the feeble tenure of power to which they know they can only cling, while Europe is prevented from interfering with them by its own internal dissensions.

Mehemit Ali was really a man of large ideas and daring projects: he was progressive, open to suggestions, and eager to accomplish a great work. But all his projects were left unfinished, and have amounted to nothing. In dreaming of reforming Egypt, he forgot to take into account the inertia of her people, the dead weight of their traditions and religion, their inherited incapacity: above all, he did not take into account the stupidity of his successors, who have shown themselves utterly incapable of carrying out or comprehending his schemes. An official of the present government proves his devotion to reform by wearing a great black over-coat, — about as becoming as regimentals to a monkey, — buttoning it grandly over his enormous chest, and going to see the *Grande Duchesse* performed at the theatre of Esbekieh in Cairo. Having performed this all-important duty, his conscience is at rest: he thinks he has done all that can be done for progress and European ideas. The music of Offenbach, cafés, concerts, and the *demi-monde*, — these are the elements of European civilization which have been imported into Egypt, and whose adoption has been hailed with so much enthusiasm by certain European residents of

Alexandria. We have reason to be proud of the ideal of progress and reform with which we have succeeded in inspiring them! I know perfectly well that the papers are filled every now and then with flaming editorials proclaiming that the era of regeneration has come; that all sorts of reforms are about being inaugurated, compulsory labor done away with, slavery abolished, &c. But who believes these statements? Some few good-hearted people who know nothing of the facts are filled with enthusiasm, while the confederates of the Pachas applaud vociferously. Do they hope to deceive Europe by this absurd farce? They have even carried the joke so far as to assert that they were going to have a parliament in Egypt, giving the people a voice in the government. A parliament in Egypt! I ask all who have visited the Pyramids and the Cataract, whether the mere idea is not enough to make the colossus of Memnon explode with laughter.

It makes one blush for one's country to think that this administration — a mere horde of brigands — should have found admirers and advocates among the French press; and the best way of explaining the mystery would probably be to give a dissertation upon the famous Egyptian

word *bucksheesh* ! Have these too indulgent advocates of the Oriental government visited Egypt, perhaps, and been received by the Pacha with flattering and overwhelming cordiality ? Have festivals been given in their honor ? have they found steamboats loaded with provisions ready for them at every port ? and guides, donkeys, and couriers awaiting their command at every station ? has the whole country seemed thrown into commotion to render them service ? Proud of the distinction with which they have been treated, these travellers, on returning to France, never grow weary of eulogizing the magnificent hospitality of the Viceroy. But have they ever thought how little this generosity cost the prince ? and what a heavy burden it must have cast upon the fellahs ? Have they ever reflected that the Viceroy was laughing at them in his sleeve, and congratulating himself upon the ease with which he had bridled the tongue of one by whom he might have been injured ?

It is the duty of the traveller, as well as that of the historian, to be sincere ; and Frenchmen, it seems to me, have something better to do than to chant the praises of Mahomet, or reprint editorials for Ishmael Pacha. Who can see Egypt-

with his own eyes, and not ardently desire the regeneration of this unfortunate Orient? No one, unless indeed he is blinded by base and interested motives. And every traveller, however obscure, can at least express his opinion and his wish that the influence of France may assist in bringing about this regeneration. Let us hope that the Isthmus of Suez will do a great deal for the human race, not only by giving commerce a grand outlet, but by opening a broad road for civilization. *Incha Allah!* as the Arabs say: God grant it!

XXXII.

DRIFTING.

AS we approached Cairo, the scene constantly became more animated. The river was gay with vessels of all kinds going up and down stream to their various destinations, and along the shore defiled donkeys and camels laden down with all sorts of merchandise. When the wind was fair, the sailing vessels spread their wings, and went skimming along like mighty water-birds; while night and day the steamboats, puffing and panting, filled the air with clouds of white smoke and showers of fiery sparks.

I was glad to get back to Cairo, although we stopped now only for a short time, as we were to continue our voyage for a few days longer. First of all, we went in search of our letters; and among them I found the welcome package bearing your handwriting. You can imagine with what delight I pored over them, and gained some tidings of the world outside mummy-land. In spite of my

admiration of the Fathers of the Desert, it is evident that I was never intended to share their life : it is not my destiny to be a hermit.

And yet I must confess that I could not think of bidding Egypt and the Nile a 'last farewell, without a pang of regret. This strange country with its wonderful beauty, its matchless climate and magnificent sky, and this glorious and celebrated river, have exerted a strange fascination over me from the first. There is something in the very air of the Orient that throws you into a dreamy and contemplative mood, a sort of ecstatic reverie, perfumed and voluptuous, in which you forget to think, forget all the cares and anxieties of life, are conscious only of intense sensation, of the ecstasy of living. The weather, during the last few days of our voyage, was delicious ; and I abandoned myself completely to this exquisite dream-life, so sweet and perfidious, but without wishing to prolong its dangerous charm. To breathe nothing but the odor of roses is death. Taste, if you choose, the cup of languid enchantment which the siren of the Orient offers you, dream for a while on the bed of roses she spreads before you, but do not linger in her fetters too long, or her influence will prove delete-

rious, enervating, fatal: you will find yourself her bond-slave and thrall.

On sped the dahabieh, skimming by the peaceful shores of the fertile valley. The villages succeeded each other in swift succession, the long processions of date-palms waved their fan-like branches as if in honor of the river that nourishes them; while the tamarisks, as sharply defined against the deep blue sky as the trees in a Japanese painting, upreared their daintily plumed heads. The current bore us swiftly down stream; and, as these features of Oriental scenery faded away into the south, a strange longing to return thither thrilled my heart.

The day concludes, as it begins, with roseate blushes, or in a splendor of flaming glory. Sometimes the sky is completely veiled in a diffused, luminous, golden mist; and then again, like the palette of a painter (the palette of the omnipotent Artist), it glows with varying shades of the most dazzling hues. At sunset the wind lulls, — it is always calm and peaceful, — delicious odors exhale from the earth, and the soft breezes waft them to you mingled with a confused murmur of distant sounds; while high over all resounds the clear, musical, sonorous voice of

the Muezzin, proclaiming to the four corners of the horizon that it is the hour of prayer.

Every evening I admire the sunset as if I had never seen it before, and the nights are so mild and pleasant that I remain until near morning upon the terrace.

XXXIII.

THE PRIME MINISTER.

WE stopped for a while at Benisouef, the capital of the province, and found it merely a large village without any sort of interest. It consists of wretched mud hovels interspersed with dilapidated mosques and forlorn minarets, standing side by side with factories chiefly remarkable for their enormous chimneys. The scene is far from being an attractive one. While Micaeli was storing his provisions, we visited the bazaars, and as soon as possible took our departure.

You are obliged to come to Benisouef in order to visit Fayoum, so celebrated in antiquity for its vineyards, its Labyrinth, and Lake Moeris. This province is the only part of Egypt which is not situated immediately in the Nile valley. It is about ten leagues in extent, a deep basin, surrounded by hills, and watered by a branch of the Nile called Bahr-Yousef.

And, by the way, this name of Bahr-Yousef

reminds me of a pretty legend which I will relate to you, as it is not, I believe, much known, — a legend of the patriarchal days.

The prime minister of one of the Pharaohs, a great and good man named Joseph, grew old ; and his enemies, thinking to undermine his power, whispered to the king that Joseph, feeble with years, could no longer meet the responsibilities of the government.

The king listened to their perfidious counsels, and, wishing to rid himself of his minister, named him governor of the province of Fayoum.

Now Fayoum was nothing but an abandoned sterile plain, inhabited by a few tribes of wandering shepherds, who lived there in their tents.

Joseph went into banishment without a murmur, and as soon as he arrived in Fayoum asserted his authority over his new subjects, forced them to work, dug canals, irrigated the soil with the waters of the Nile, planted harvests, and built cities ; in a word, he governed his desolate domain with so much sagacity and wisdom that in a short time it became the most fertile province in Egypt.

But now Pharaoh, comprehending that he had been deceived, recalled Joseph to court. Struck

with admiration, he took his own gold necklace, hung it about his neck, and overwhelmed him with gifts and honors.

Joseph continued prime minister after this till the day of his death, which did not occur for some time, as he lived to the great age of a hundred and ten years.

The province of Fayoum is celebrated to this very day for its fertility and splendid fields of roses, whence is made the ottar of roses which we prize so highly.

XXXIV.

JACKALS.

ALL the evening we have been listening to the howling of the jackals,—such a concert as was never heard before : for two leagues around the very echoes have been deafened. Imagine ten thousand babies crying, shrieking, wailing, all at once, in the most piteous and the shrillest tones ; or imagine a whole army of cats, mewing without an instant's intermission in hideous concord, and perhaps you will be able to form some idea of it. To make matters worse, all the dogs of the neighborhood, jealous of the fine voices of their cousins, and afraid, apparently, that they would lose prestige if they did not outdo them, have joined in with the most unearthly and ferocious howls. Moored for the night on a shore perfectly uninhabited, we have been entertained for hours with this discordant uproar.

The cause of all this commotion we could not tell. The crescent moon, sharp as the sickle of a

harvester, gleamed fitfully in the west, now drifting through a lake of sky, and now swept by hurrying clouds, small, white, translucent, and polished, as flakes of ice glittering in a stream at the breaking up of winter. These clouds, which covered the heavens, blown by contrary winds, scudded hither and thither in the wildest confusion. Perhaps the jackals, issuing from their dens, marked the change in the so invariably cloudless heavenly dome ; perhaps they deemed the gleaming clouds overhead dangerous missiles, hailstones about to fall upon them, and howled in terror. Whatever induced them to tune up their voices in such remarkable style, we at least have had the benefit of a concert never to be forgotten.

XXXV.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

TO-DAY, in passing Gizeh, we caught a glimpse of the eight pyramids, that chain of mighty monuments that loom up so strangely against the western horizon. Seen in all the splendor of the sunset, shining from behind them, they looked like huge black mountains. *Instar montium eductæ Pyramides*, as Tacitus says. Soon came the Night, dropping down upon them her shadowy violet mantle.

Though I have been here so long, I am constantly surprised at the quickness with which day and night succeed each other. The chariot of the sun, the chariot of the night, these are mere metaphors, poetic phrases, when we use them; but in Egypt they seem to describe a reality. As soon as the sun drops beneath the horizon, leaving behind him a train of bright, incandescent clouds swimming in an atmosphere of misty gold, — the very moment his broad disk disappears, —

Night is crowned queen of the universe. She does not glide quietly, stealthily, to her throne as with us, half hiding her face in a soft twilight veil. No! A true daughter of Erebus she comes, clothed in her black garment of mystery: a goddess terrible and magnificent, her forehead crowned with stars, she leaps into her chariot, and drives forth her ebony steeds through the void gloom of space.

Surprised by the night, we cast anchor on a lonely shore, but without any idea of the pleasure we were about to enjoy. There must have been a camp in the vicinity: at any rate, a party of Arabs were squatting around a bright fire on the bank, while the invariable nargile of hashish was going the rounds of the circle. It was a scene worthy of Rembrandt. In the darkness it was impossible to tell the exact number of these swart children of the desert; but, as the firelight rose and fell, the strangest effects were produced. Some single object — a striped turban, a swarthy face, a head without a body, a hand without an arm, a sleeve, the fold of a cloak, the gleam of white teeth — would flash out with intense vividness, and sink back into shadowy obscurity. The contrast of the strong fire-light and intense environ-

ing darkness, the wild picturesqueness, the savage grace of the figures of which we could only catch fitful glimpses, made one of the most remarkable pictures, the most enthralling scenes that I have ever witnessed. And, to make it perfect, came a little musician, and taking his place among the rest sang a wild, monotonous chant, to the accompaniment of some shrill instruments ; an entertainment to which the Arabs listened with grunts and gulps of satisfaction.

This was our last evening on the Nile. The next day we returned to Cairo, started for Suez, and eight days afterwards embarked for Palestine and Libya.

This, then, is the last of my letters, my dear friend ; and, in concluding the pleasant task of writing them, I have only to express my wish that I may have inspired you with a desire to visit for yourself the wonders that I have so poorly described, the picturesque scenes to which I have been so incapable of doing justice.

And one word more : if, indeed, your good star ever guides you to Egypt, my dear Etienne, follow my example, and make your voyage on the Nile in a sailing-boat. Steamboats are the fashion of the day, and more and more they will replace the

good old sailing craft, even on the Nile, which was once its exclusive domain. Some day, I suppose, the Thebiad will even be cut up with railroads, though God grant that time may be far removed. But no matter: when you visit a country of the past, do not be persuaded to despise the institutions of the past. Believe me, no true conception of the sky of the Orient could ever be formed by one who only saw it through a perpetual cloud of smoke. For my part, it seems to me that all travellers should be divided into two classes, those who travel for business or duty, — the traveller strictly, — and the tourist who traverses land and sea merely for the delight it affords him. Now the capricious and fanciful goddess of adventurers smiles only upon the tourist, and reserves all sorts of annoyances and afflictions for the traveller. It is only the tourist who can catch the poetry, the charm of the scenes through which he is passing.

You know the conventional, oft-drawn picture of the traveller. Selfish and apathetic, wrapped in innumerable coats and overcoats, and still more closely enveloped in pride and self-sufficiency, despising every one he meets, carrying with him luggage enough for an army, but too little to sup-

ply his innumerable superfluous wants, the most wretched of men if deprived of his daily journal and *café au lait*,—this worthy individual, with his corpulent figure and rubicund face, has had justice done him by many a satirist. He is a diplomat, perhaps, travelling in the interests of his country, or a speculator going in search of cotton or other commodities; always in a hurry, the steamboat does not go fast enough to suit him, and a quarter of an hour's delay drives him crazy.

The tourist, on the contrary, has no one end before him, but is allured hither and thither by a hundred delightful fancies. He is travelling for pleasure: like Xavier de Maistre's butterfly,

“Caprice his only guide,
His home the world so wide.”

Free and joyous, he lives in the present, and enters into the spirit of each passing moment. It matters little to him whether he pauses at a fountain to quench his thirst, plucks a flower, pursues a bird, greets a countryman,—every thing affords him delight. At every step he makes discoveries, and he is always meeting with adventures.

If you want to have your memory filled with delightful recollections, with enchanting pictures

that you can summon up before you at will, or whenever your imagination is kindled, you have only to visit Egypt as the free and careless tourist.

Do as I have done, stroll along the sandy beach, dream and meditate in the waving and majestic palm-groves, take no note of the flight of time, or of how speedily or slowly you are advancing, but find your delight in the passing moment. Watch the wind swelling the sail, hearken to the singing of your crew, to the measured throbbing of their oars; and, when night comes, cast your anchor against a green bank or off a lonely shore, and sleep in the open air, under the stars of heaven, as did the shepherd kings. There is only one way to see Egypt; and that is sailing on the Nile.

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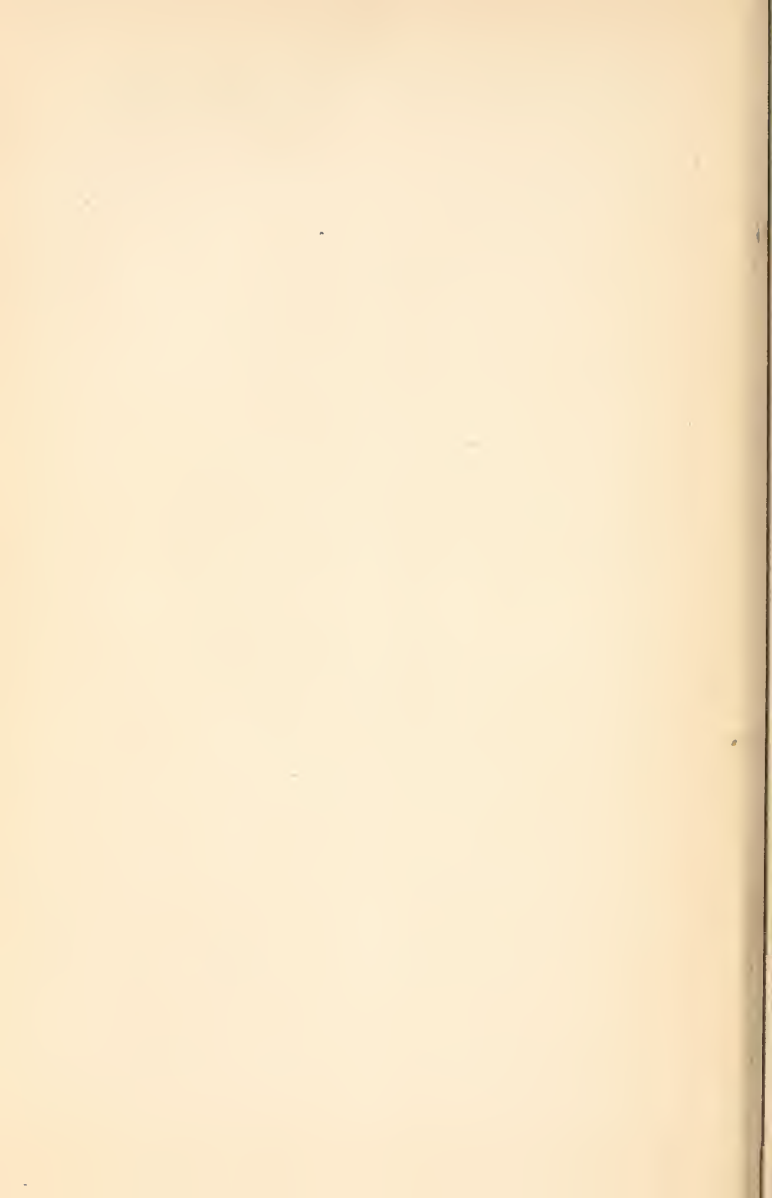
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